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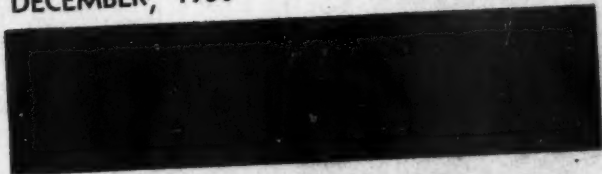


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DECEMBER, 1950 - VOL. 17 No. 4



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Prades Festival

Pablo Casals

DIRECTOR



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■ Concerto for Violin in A Minor; Concerto for Piano in F Minor; Trio Sonata for Violin, Piano, Flute. Toccata and Fugue in E Minor. Ⓢ Record ML 4353

■ English Suite; Sonata for Flute and Piano in B Minor; Prelude and Fugue in E Minor, No. VIII (From Well-Tempered Clavichord, Vol. 1). Ⓢ Record ML 4354

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The American RECORD GUIDE



DEC. 1950 • Vol. XVII, No. 4

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American Music Lover



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Published by THE AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE

• Editorial Office: 115 Reed Ave., Pelham 65, N.Y.
Business Office: No. 11, Post Office Bldg., Pelham
65, New York.

• Peter Hugh Reed, Editor; C. J. Luten, James Norwood, Associate Editors; Philip L. Miller, Anson W. Peckham, Harold C. Schonberg, Contributing Editors. Julius S. Spector, Art Editor.

• Paul Girard, Circulation & Advertising.

• Published monthly, *The American Record Guide* sells at 30 cents the copy, or \$3.00 annually in the U.S.A. and Canada. Annual rate in all other foreign countries, \$3.25.

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• Correspondence should be accompanied by return postage.

• Application for additional re-entry at Easton Post Office, Easton, Pa., pending.

• Reentered as 2nd class matter November 7, 1944 at the Post Office at New York, N.Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. (Copyright 1950 by Peter Hugh Reed.)

LPs In Europe

Editorial Notes

FROM EUROPE comes the information that long playing records will be manufactured in several countries beginning January 1951. The reception of LP has been varied on the Continent and comments pro and con from several sources are as amusing as they are interesting.

Leo Riemans, record critic in The Hague, Holland, writes: "Decca has introduced Long Playing here, and so far it is a flop. Comparisons between their LPs and regular records gives a slight edge to the latter. A definite point against LPs is they attract dirt or dust like a dog does fleas, and I am sure their wearing quality will be considerably below normal 78s when played with thorns [sic]. The recital records are sheer stupidity. I cannot imagine anyone wanting to hear Tebaldi, Conley and Ellabelle Davis sing ten arias in succession. True, you need not play them all, but then what is the use of putting them on LP? It is forcing people to buy a number of items that they may not want or like in order to get some they do like or want. Now, in all other cases of merchandising, such a practice is a *criminal offence* in this country (like selling matches when you buy cigarettes or tobacco). . . I agree that there is much to say for LP in the recording of symphonies, concertos, etc. Even for opera I do not think it ideal, because I find very few people who wish to play an opera in its entirety. They want to have it on tap, complete, but some days they play this fragment and other days another one. . . Much of the opera singing we are getting today on records is really bad, and in my estimation most of the singing from Vienna, Italy and elsewhere is more *Bull Carlo* than *Bel Carlo*."

Our friend from Holland, who has a great admiration for the big name singers of other days, seems to be intolerant of the young singers of today. While one is willing to ad-

mit that generally speaking, this is a day of smaller and lighter voices, there are certainly among this group of singers some who are definitely gifted and quite often far better musicians. Mr. Rieman regards Wilma Lipp's voice as small and colorless. "I cannot accept her *Martern aller Arten*," he says, "when I have it ideally sung by Hempel, Bosetti, Lilli Lehmann, Nemuth, Hüni-Mihacek, Ivögun and Erna Berger, and a half a dozen others (and I do *not* mean Miss Steber)."

From Vienna, a friendly correspondent writes: "We, in Vienna, have long enjoyed the opera performance of *Die Entführung*, which Decca has just recorded. Miss Lipp has a sweet, youthful voice and is a charming actress. I like her better in the part than any singer I have ever heard, and I've heard Berger, Ivögun and some of the old time favorites. The production is so beautiful that I'm sure if it were transported complete to your country, it would make a huge hit wherever it was presented." Opinions do vary.

In Favor of the Opera as a Unit

Mr. Rieman's opposition to an entire opera on LP is not shared by many. Our Viennese correspondent is enthusiastic about the operatic LPs emanating from Vienna and Italy. "Not perfect products to be sure," he says, "but what a joy it is to hear an aria in its proper sequence rather than apart from the opera." A friend in Paris voices his appreciation in much the same manner. He says in part: "The Glyndebourne Festival recordings of the Mozart operas were most enjoyable despite the fact that many of the big arias have been sung better by other singers on separate records. But one does not like to live on just arias from operas of Mozart, Verdi and others, one wants to hear the music once in a while in its entirety and to know the aria in its right context."

There are some European critics who decry an unknown singer, one especially that started out in the chorus. "I note in one of the Viennese mass recordings," writes one critic (who shall remain anonymous), "a bass soloist who unsuccessfully competed in a contest some time back and whom I heard last year with the Vienna company in *Die Entführung*. He played the part of a Harem-watch — didn't open his mouth at all. In fact, he was in the chorus and was used for supering!!!!" It is a mistake to reason this way, for just as

human beings grow in character and change as time goes on, so the humble artist may grow and change for the better. Some famous singers started out in the chorus of opera. This critic goes on to say, using our own vernacular, "What gets my goat is seeing such singers hailed by the American press." Maybe he should hear the offending singer in his recorded work and decide whether his goat should now be tethered securely. Constantly one hears an exclamation from those who have prejudices that this or that "burns them up" because it is not exactly what they alone want.

78s That Play Longer

Mr. Rieman's gives us some interesting news about the latest Deutsche Grammophon records. "This concern has brought out a new system, or rather they have perfected the old, old system of 78 rpm records. They have issued a series of normal 12" shellac 78s with double the playing time. One side now plays from 8 to 9 minutes, twice what it formerly did. The best part of this is the new disc doesn't need any new equipment, it can be played with any fairly heavy pickup and with thorn needles. In fact, I have had less breakdowns on them than on ordinary 78s, heavily recorded. I can easily play two 9-minute sides with one point. Deutsche Grammophon achieved these new results by shrewdly discovering that wide walls between the grooves were only necessary for very heavy passages, otherwise they were a distinct hindrance. These 9-minute discs have very close grooves except where the music grows loud or there is a topnote for a singer, then they are automatically spaced out to prevent breakdown of the walls. The volume is the same as always, and the reproduction is as fine as the best *ffrr*. Moreover, they wear well, and of course give twice as much music. This should be the ideal solution for some shorter works for example, *Ah, Perfido* of Beethoven and perhaps the *Alto Rhapsody* of Brahms, or a selection like the *Liebestod* which was always too long for a single 12" side and too short for a satisfactory division. I am always depressed with the people that makes the decisions in record companies. What do you think this concern issued for its first vocal item in a double-timed disc? Elisabeth Höngen in yet another complete *Frauenliche*

(Continued on page 122)

BEHIND THE SCENES OF VOX PRODUCTIONS

IT HAS BEEN DIFFICULT in the past to get behind the scenes in the recording world. Future events and the manner in which things in general are accomplished have always been closely guarded secrets. Ever since we became associated with the record industry, we have tried at various times to get inside facts from numerous officials. Though we have acquired on occasion "top secrets," we have seldom been given permission to publish them.

Recently, we had a long visit with George H. Mendelssohn, the president of Vox Productions, Inc. During the course of our conversation countless questions were asked, a great deal of inside information was gleaned. As Mr. Mendelssohn was not reluctant to speak of his engrossing activities, we asked permission to present them to our readers. To our surprise, he consented.

George Mendelssohn has been active in the musical world, both in this country and in Europe, for many years. A distant relative of Felix Mendelssohn, he was born in Budapest and was trained from childhood in music. He studied piano with the late Béla Bartok and has long been one of the late composer's champions. It was Mr. Mendelssohn who was instrumental in releasing the now famous set *Béla Bartok Plays Bartok* (Continental LP disc CLP-101). This was at a time when the composer was shamefully neglected on records, back around 1943.

Making several trips yearly to Paris, Vienna and other European cities, keeps Mr. Mendelssohn intimately informed of continental musical activities. Inasmuch as the orchestral recordings released by Vox emanate from Europe, we were eager to know something about Old World conditions in comparison with our own. Mr. Mendelssohn's knowledge from close observation proved as we had anticipated most absorbing.

Vox has long had an alliance with French Polydor, which has enabled them to release in the past some valued recordings. Recently, this enterprising American concern has made

affiliations with Discophiles Français, Boite a Musique, and French Pathé. The latter association, only lately formed, is of interest to all record buyers for some of Pathé's widely endorsed releases which have not been available for some time will be restored to American catalogues. Such a release as the famous set of Gluck's *Orpheus*, featuring the late Alice Raveau and Germaine Feraldy in the leading roles, is a case in point. It is now available on an LP disc (PL 6750). Other leading Pathé releases will follow in short order.

Vox has also entered into an alliance with Berlin Radio which permits it to record major works broadcast by that organization. The Vox set DL 6070 (4 LP discs) of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* came from this source.

In Vienna, Vox has a working agreement with the Vienna Symphony Studios which permits recordings to be accomplished with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra (an organization in existence over a half century) and other associated artists. One of Vox's major contributions, derived from this source, is its recent issue of Bach's *St. John Passion* (set PL 6550, 3 LP discs). The Viennese association augurs well for future releases and Vox's president is at present in Vienna supervising some new productions.

In Europe, Mr. Mendelssohn informs us, first consideration is given to suitability of the recording artists for the particular music to be preserved. Moreover, duplications are avoided no matter how widely known or famous an artist may be. Recently, Mr. Mendelssohn told us, one big name artist literally burned up the cable lines trying to influence him on allowing duplications of several concertos which are already well represented in his catalogue.

"While one respects the integrity of a great artist," he said, "one must have some allegiance to another artist, particularly one who has accomplished a performance of a given work that is regarded as worthy. If an artist does not cooperate in the scheme of

things we simply do not continue our association. There are far too many duplications these days, and the need for first-rate performances of other works cannot be underestimated, especially in relation to the growing literature of long-playing works.

"The invention of the long-playing disc seems to me the biggest thing that has happened in the record business. It has been like a shot of adrenalin in the arms of ailing workers. No other speed offers similar enjoyment, especially when the recordings are properly compensated. We use the same frequency curve as Columbia, the pioneers of LP, who manufacture all our records, and we are proud of our association with Columbia and the work it has done for us. Opposition at first to LP in Europe was understandable but not pardonable. It is true that Europe does not have the great number of modern reproducing units which exists in this country and that the greater majority of the European gramophones are not equipped to handle ideally modern recordings like LPs. Times are changing, however, and more and more LPs are being imported from this country. By January 1951, there is every reason to believe LPs will be made in Europe."

Equipment In Europe

Recording conditions in Europe have improved enormously in the past two years, Mr. Mendelssohn told us. Modern equipment, much of which is imported from this country, is widely available in the reproducing field.

"Take, for example," he said, "the equipment used in the studios of the Vienna Symphony. Here, we find the finest under the supervision of the best technicians and engineers in Vienna, whose chief function is proper reproduction of music. They use the finest Magnecorder tape equipment, and once a recording is completed for us it is flown immediately to New York by air mail express. The Berlin Radio also has some of the best equipment in Europe, and in Paris the advancements in this field are far ahead of what they were a few years back when I made first post-war arrangements for recordings.

"In Europe, there are many musicians working with recording engineers, and these musicians have specific ideas about different schools and periods of music — how they should be recorded, how they should sound.

"Old music, or rather music written in the 17th and 18th centuries, they contend, sounds better recorded in intimate surroundings, a premise with which I am wholeheartedly in agreement. None of this music was written to be played in modern concert halls by modern symphony orchestras. The concert halls are so large that the delicate nuances of the music are generally lost, and the size of the halls overweight the resonant, tonal quality originally conceived by the composers.

On the Performance of Mozart

"The music of Mozart, for example, flourishes best in intimate surroundings. The size of the orchestra in Mozart's day was about half that of the full-strength, modern orchestra. Of course, the knowing conductor of today reduces the size of his orchestral forces for performances of Haydn, Mozart, Bach, Handel or works of similar composers. The reduced ensemble in a large, over-resonant concert hall, however, fails to preserve the pristine charm of the music's timbre. The elegance of Mozart, the classical beauty of Bach and Haydn often evaporates.

"Today, most engineers are mainly concerned with wide frequency responses and exalted tonal splendor, no matter the true character of a musical work. In sharpening the sound on high frequencies, engineers are unaware that they are destroying some of the finest qualities of a great deal of music. Strings are apt to become wiry or edgy in sound. This makes one over-conscious of the mechanical side of reproduced music. Generally speaking all 17th- and 18th-century music suffers from this kind of treatment.

"We use two halls in Paris for recording. For piano and small ensembles we use the Salle Chopin which seats around 500 people. We also record in the Salle Pleyel, which is larger than Carnegie Hall. The Bartok *Rhapsody, Op. 1* (for piano and orchestra) was made there as it provided an appropriately resonant chamber for the larger sound. The work asked for very live and percussive quality for which we worked. A few years back microphone technique was limited in Europe, but today multiple microphones are widely employed. In the Salle Pleyel as many as three microphones may be used, while in the Salle Chopin either one or two. If an additional microphone is needed, it is always there to be used.

"I would like to tell your readers that I am

no technician, but being a musician I know how music should sound and always endeavor to cooperate with engineers to get the results which I think are right for a given work of music. There are circumstances, naturally, beyond the control of engineers and musicians which have to be taken into consideration. But, on the whole, one can and does get results that satisfy the artists, the engineers, and myself."

Vox has signed a number of distinguished artists who are busily engaged in recording studios both in this country and in Europe. Among these are the pianists — Guiomar Novaes, Lili Kraus, André Foldes, Mieczysław Horszowski, and Gaby Casadesus. Otto Klemperer and Clemens Krauss are two of Vox's leading conductors, both of whom are preparing important works for coming recording sessions.

A Great Chopin Player

Mr. Mendelssohn regards Guiomar Novaes as one of the "incomparable Chopin" players of today, and he deems it a privilege that Vox can perpetuate "her eloquent interpretations on records." He feels that Mme. Novaes has never before been given the recording opportunities that her splendid artistry deserves. He proudly pointed out that her first two LP discs, containing the *24 Preludes* (VL 6170) and the *Sonata in B flat minor, Op. 35* and *Fantasia in F minor, Op. 49* (VL 6230) have been widely praised as some of the finest Chopin performances ever recorded.

The following are a group of new works which will shortly be released by Vox Productions:

MOZART: *Masonic Music* (including Cantatas). Mulhouse Chorus and Chamber Orchestra, with Gerard Souzay and Hugues Cuenod.

MOZART: *Concerto in B flat, K. 595*. André Foldes, Lamoureux Orchestra, Goldschmidt (conductor).

MONTEVERDI: *Orfeo*. Radio Berlin Orchestra, Max Meili (tenor), Helmut Koch (conductor).

BEETHOVEN: *Fantasy, Op. 80, for piano, chorus and orchestra*. Frederick Wührer, Kammerchor, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Clemens Krauss (conductor).

BACH: *Little Book of Anna Magdalena Bach*. Jo Vincent (soprano).

FAURE: *Phantasy for piano and orchestra*. Gaby Casadesus, Lamoureux Orchestra.

SCHUETZ: *Seven Last Words of Christ*. Kammerchor, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Ferdinand Grossmann (conductor).

PALESTRINA: *Missa Papae Marcelli*. St. Eustache Singers, Pére Martin (conductor).

LALANDE: *De Profundis*, Psalm for soloists, chorus and orchestra (original Pathé recording).

FAURE: *Recital of Songs*. Ninon Vallin (from her Pathé records).

MENDELSSOHN: *Concerto No. 2 in D minor*. F. Wuehrer (piano), Vienna Symphony Orchestra, R. Moralt (conductor).

BACH: *Cantatas Nos. 56 and 82*. Doda Conrad (bass), Instrumental Ensemble, Charles Henderson (conductor).

SCHUBERT: *Symphony No. 4 and Six German Dances*. Lamoureux Orchestra, Otto Klemperer (conductor).

MOZART: *Concerto in G major, K. 453*. Gaby Casadesus (piano), Pro Musica Orchestra, Eugene Bigot (conductor).

Recent Importations

▲In the last two months some of the personalities, mentioned in this column in the past, have been actively reported in the local news. Apparently, due to the ministrations of those ineffable champions of culture — our duly-elected lawmakers in Washington, we are going to be denied the opportunity of hearing the Bulgarian basso **Boris Christoff**, the sensation of Covent Garden and the HMV lists, who was originally scheduled for a leading role in the Met's opening night production of Verdi's *Don Carlos*. Christoff was replaced by **Cesare Siepi**, a young member of the Scala company who has made a number of excellent discs for Cetra.

Victoria de los Angeles, first mentioned here a little more than a year ago for her thrilling *La Vida Breve* record, made her American debut on October 24th, after one postponement caused by sickness. To say that she lived up to the expectations of her records is a mild understatement. She was marvelous. Aside from certain interpretative weaknesses in the handling of *Lieder*, no doubt the result of inexperience and misguided coaching, her program maintained an unbelievably high standard of vocalism that hovered on the brink of perfection. A de-

lightful climax was her final encore, for which she unexpectedly appeared with a guitar and perched nonchalantly on the piano stool, accompanied herself enchantingly in a haunting Spanish melody.

Whether or not her shortness of stature and solidity of figure will affect her operatic career here, I would hesitate to guess. Miss de los Angeles has a most charming and unaffected stage personality in the concert hall, which, together with the perfection of her artistry, completely enslaved the large audience. One only wished that the enterprising Mr. Hurok, who sponsored this debut, had cut a few less corners and had provided a better accompanist.

Another familiar name on record labels was manifest in the flesh when the **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra** in the course of an extended U.S. tour recently made scheduled appearances in New York. Those of us who are bugs on the subject of orchestral tone and technique, recalling the discussions generated by the French Radiodiffusion Orchestra's visit last year, looked forward eagerly to the Britishers' arrival, for despite the improvement in recording technique in recent years, one really needs to be in the hall to make an accurate appraisal of sound and texture.

Familiar Names

Sir **Thomas Beecham** has gathered together an imposing ensemble peppered with names not unknown to record collectors. The outstanding cellist **Anthony Pini**, who has participated in a number of fine chamber music discs, the veteran clarinetist **Jack Brymer**, the hornist **Dennis Brain**, well represented on the English Columbia lists in several standard solo works, are probably the most familiar.

Based upon but two concerts it is hardly fair to make a sweeping pronouncement concerning the merits of a visiting orchestra. It is no secret that touring ensembles are seldom at their best, as foreign diets and climates, the strain of travel, unfamiliarity with the acoustical properties of the hall of the moment, all work to the detriment of the ideal result.

The Royal Philharmonic's tone is not radically different from the sound of our own top-ranking bands. To be sure, the British strings are somewhat brighter and cleaner, woodwinds (save bassoons) and trumpets about the same quality, trombones and horns a

great deal more open and coarse. The solo oboe, despite a thin sound, the clarinet and trumpet I thought were very good indeed, the other winds just average, about what one might expect to find in Minneapolis and Chicago. Intonation was above average, as was ensemble, despite some muddy passages the first night. High point of the evening was the opening *Star Spangled Banner*. Believe it or not! Never have I heard it played with so much spirit or seen it conducted with such a bravura show of stick technique.

A long-awaited importation, the **Hindemith Violin Concerto**, which won the concerto division of the *Disques* magazine awards in 1949, has finally made its appearance here (French HMV DB11212/5). Played with suitable technical finesse and spiritual élan by the veteran French violinist, **Henri Merckel**, assisted by the **Lamoureux Orchestra** directed by **Desormiere**, this fiendishly difficult score is accorded a performance and recording of excellent quality, certainly all the composer could ask for.

Hindemith's "Violin Concerto"

As for the music itself, I have a disturbed feeling that it is already dated, despite the fact that the eminent Yale professor composed it as recently as 1939. It is a jumble of polyphonic effects, heavy-footed romanticism and just plain stubborn individualism. The opening movement is powerful, sinewy, on a lofty plane, reminiscent of the "Temptation of Saint Anthony" section of *Mathis der Maler*. The slow movement traces the meandering line of the solo violin in a thoughtful but apparently aimless manner. The finale, torn asunder by a lengthy, tortuous cadenza of uncompromising ruggedness, contains few of the elements popularly believed to render a piece endearing and/or enduring, despite a rhythmic allusion to Kreisler's *Tambourin Chinois*.

The English pianist **Solomon** reaches a pinnacle of his recording career in his new set of Beethoven's *C minor Sonata No. 32, Opus 111* (HMV C7786/9). This is one of the big sonatas, very difficult to play and extremely hard to integrate. Solomon is very fine; his piano has received most lifelike treatment from the engineers. Don't miss this one!

Another important keyboard contribution, emanating this time from Denmark, is **Ar-**

(Continued on page 121)

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Huddie Ledbetter
(Leadbelly) and
his guitar.

SOME FOLK SONG RELEASES

NEGRO FOLK MUSIC OF ALABAMA —
Vol. 1, Secular (LP 12" disc EFL 1417),
Vol. II, Religious (LP 12" disc EFL 1418).
Ethnic Folkways Library.

TAKE THIS HAMMER. (*Huddie Ledbetter
Memorial Album*): **Huddie Ledbetter**
(Leadbelly) (folk singer). Ethnic Folk-
ways Library LP 10" disc FLP 804.

DARLING COREY. **Peter Seeger** (folk
singer). Ethnic Folkways Library LP 10"
disc FLP 806.

▲HAD A MUSICOLOGIST been asked 20
years ago to describe American folk music,
he would probably have designated Negro
Spirituals without differentiating between the
original and the concert versions, some cow-
boy songs, and some square dances of the kind
derisively referred to as "hill-billy." In the
intervening years our knowledge of folk music
has been transformed. The agents of the
transformation have been many, including the
WPA projects, the extensive regional record-
ings of the Library of Congress, the indepen-
dent researches of men like John and Alan
Lomax and Ben Botkin, the numerous studies
of the roots of jazz that have unearthed a
wealth of Blues, work-songs, and instrumental
dance music of the Negro people. All these,

we have found, are music that can be called
"folk." The United States, we now know,
has one of the richest bodies of folk music of
any country. To this date, musicologists in
the universities have been generally reluctant
to dip even a toe into these waters. It has al-
ways seemed to be a contradiction that Ameri-
can scholars should pay so much attention to
the music of Asia, the South Seas, or medieval
Europe (all of which is, of course, worth
studying) and yet ignore music at home equal-
ly worthy of study — music full of the most
fascinating problems and potential lessons.

One of the problems is that of national or
ethnic origin. All of the music is American
in the form in which it is heard today. Yet
it all came from somewhere, either taken over
bodily or slightly changed, as in the case of
many Elizabethan songs, or taken over as
seeds which sent out new shoots in a new soil,
as in the case of African music. Besides
music of African and Elizabethan origin there
are songs which sound like those of 18th-
century England, particularly the ballads
which were popular in 1776 and 1812; Scot-
tish and Irish songs; Protestant hymn tunes;
songs which are undoubtedly Central Euro-
pean, Dutch, German and Slovak, songs of
Spanish origin, passing up through Mexico

or the Caribbean islands. Another interesting problem is that of idiom, and level of folk music development. Some folk music sounds like what is lamely called "primitive," a misleading term, because "primitive" music, like that of Africa, Asia and the South Seas, was highly polished and studied in rhythms and handling of vocal line. Some of the music sounds modal. Some is pentatonic. Some has a definite major-minor pattern, and even shows the influence of "art" songs, for just as "art" songs drew heavily upon folk patterns, so the reverse process has also taken place.

These four long-playing records are only a sampling, although an excellent one, of the folk-music riches available for study. All music presented on them has an authentic folk ring, a quality difficult to prove but apparent to the ear. It does not come out of any idiomatic "purity" but out of the fact that, regardless its derivation, it emerges simply, homogeneously and "naturally" in sound, like a person-to-person communication or like speech becoming heightened into poetry and song. This is true of the music whether it suggests "primitive" derivations in its rhythmic subtleties defying bar lines or its melodic patterns that defy scalar feeling and even familiar intervals, or whether it is derived from hymn tune and Elizabethan art song.

Folk "Origins"

The two discs called *Negro Folk Music of Alabama* contain the most serious attempt to trace what may be called "origins." The record of secular music tries to search out patterns that can be traced back to Africa. It includes blues, work songs, harmonica pieces, field calls, dancing songs and childrens' songs. Some of the unaccompanied singing is especially beautiful, as in the case of Rich Amerson's *Black Woman*, in which he simulates the presence of three voices, punctuating his normal tenor with falsetto phrases and a deep-voiced repetition of "ah-hum," and the field calls. The record of religious music attempts to capture the spirituals in "folk" versions which are freer in rhythm, speech-like in delivery, antiphonal in form and improvisational in continuity — quite different from their concert versions. Heard in this way, what may be called the African quality is more apparent in them, and also, in the same

songs, one hears more clearly melodies taken over from the hymn tunes found on this continent.

In general all or most of the music on these two records sounds like a folk art already in its period of decline. A folk culture does not exist as a static art in a changing world. It, along with individual works, has its period of gestation, maturity, and old age. Words which originally had pointed and symbolic meanings harden into meaningless patterns, repeated by rote, as in the case of childrens' songs, or change their meaning and connotations, as in the religious songs. The flourishing period of the spirituals was 100 years ago, when they were a powerful arm of the Underground Railroad escapes and anti-slavery struggles. Words such as "Wonder where I will lie down," "Elijah's chair coming after me," "On my journey," "Free at last, free at last," had other connotations than they have today. The significance of the music on these records is: they are less a thriving folk culture of today than reminiscences, by extraordinarily fine and talented folk singers, of a culture that was thriving in their childhood or taken over from their parents.

A Genuine Bard

For the collector (less interested in problems of derivation) seeking only a concentrated record of folk music splendidly performed, I can think of nothing more rewarding than the 10" LP disc of the late Huddie Ledbetter, better known by his nickname of Leadbelly. Leadbelly was a genuine bard and folk artist of the most creative talents, a walking anthology of folk music. He learned new songs quickly and easily, was able to sing in the most varied musical styles and give each performance vitality by his own exuberance and vibrant personality. He also had a magic facility with every instrument he touched, not only the guitar on which his performance was celebrated but also the concertina and piano, as heard on these records. The music he performs here includes rollicking mountain dances and "breakdowns," haunting Blues with their defiance of major-minor patterns and concert music intervals, Spirituals hummed, sung and spoken, and tender, sentimental ballads. One of the latter is the song *Irene*, which he first popularized, and which has recently become a tin-pan-alley hit. It has more than a family resemblance

to one of the great melodies sung in Sarastro's temple, in the first act of *The Magic Flute*.

Peter Seeger, unlike Ledbetter, did not grow up with folk music from childhood. His father is the renowned musicologist, Charles Seeger, and his mother the well-known composer, Ruth Crawford. He has been collecting and performing folk songs for many years, and has a remarkable virtuosity with the five-string banjo, which sounds rich and yet improvisational in his hands and fully within the bounds of folk style. He sings with captivating verve and gusto, coming from an intense desire to awaken listeners to the human images of love, laughter and sorrow contained in these songs. The songs he has chosen here are mainly of English, Scottish and Irish derivation, with some square dances, and this disc is as good a collection of such material as may be found on records.

The notes to each disc have the full texts of the songs and the interesting commentary found in all of the *Folkways* series.

HUNGARIAN FOLK SONGS — Recorded in Hungary under the supervision of **Bela Bartok** — *Vocal solos, flute and bagpipe*. Ethnic Folkways Library EFL 1000, four 10" vinylite discs in album.

▲THIS RECORDING is a most interesting addition both to the valuable Ethnic Folkways Library and to a Bartok record collection. These are actual recordings that Bartok made as part of his folk song research. Some of them were actually made in the field, and others in Budapest recording studios by folk singers brought to the city for the purpose. These songs are mostly for unaccompanied voice and the untrained heard here have a most affecting quality. In some, a flute or bagpipe alternates with the voice, and one side is devoted to three bagpipe solos.

Strictly speaking, not a note in any of this music was composed by Bartok. Yet it was an act of considerable artistic power to recognize the importance of this music, and to select and analyze its basic patterns. Moses Asch has had the happy idea of including in the notes not only the words of the songs, but nine pages of Bartok's own transcriptions of these songs. Looking at the written music, we can see the infinite care taken by the composer to get their exact characteristics down

on paper; in the indications of slurred notes, grace-notes or appoggiaturas, and the metrical patterns that may change in the same song from 4/4 to 9/8, 17/16, 2/8 and 15/16. Many characteristics of Bartok's own style may be heard in these songs, such as the "endless melody" gravitating about a single note as an axis, or about a note and its fourth or fifth step above; the drone note of the bagpipe; the constantly shifting rhythmic patterns.

Comparing these actual folk songs to even the simplest of Bartok's compositions — for example those based directly on folk song such as the pieces for children, the folk song arrangements for voice and piano or the duets for two violins — we may also discern the tremendous addition made by the composer. For even the most transparent and uncomplicated of these works has a polished form and beauty of sound that is lacking in the folk performances themselves. The point is not made to raise "art" music above "folk" music, which would be as ridiculous as to raise "folk" music above "art" music. These are two different worlds which influence each other but do not replace one another. The folk music reveals the birth of music itself, on the lips and in the activities of the people. Without it, there would be no "art" music. The composer, as Glinka said, "arranges the music of the people." But in the "arranging," the world of conscious thought and reflection of experience must be taken into account, the ability not only to bring the human imagery of the people themselves into music but to create a record of human passions and dramatic action that enable us to understand better the world in which we live.

—Sidney Finkelstein

Recent Importations

(Continued from page 118)

ile for Piano, Opus 25, nold Schoenberg's Su played by the composer-virtuoso **Niels Viggo Bentzon** (HMV Z331/2). I can not say that I recommend this score for its entertainment value, even when employing the word entertainment in its loftiest sense. In fact, I personally have little sympathy for the pedantic astringencies of this piece. It is, however, an outstanding rendition, beautifully recorded

of a very arduous modern score by a composer with considerable pretensions to importance.

The standout vocal effort to come this way in the past month or so is a very fine performance (Eng. Columbia LX1290/2) of Bach's solo *Cantata No. 82 — Ich habe genug* — by **Hans Hotter**, leading baritone of the Vienna Opera, who made a sensational debut in November with the Metropolitan in a revival of Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*. When I first heard Hotter on records, I was not impressed with his unctuousness in the Brahms *Requiem* and his overly vibrant contribution to the Beethoven *Ninth*. These unpleasant characteristics have apparently disappeared with the passing of time, for the present effort evokes nothing but praise. The soft, velvety quality of his voice, with its dark overtones, is ideally suited to the melancholy connotations of the text.

The instrumental background by members of the **Philharmonia Orchestra** conducted by **Prof. Anthony Bernard**, with **Sidney Sutcliffe**, the accomplished oboe soloist, and **Geraint Jones**, the sensitive organist, is in every way first-rate. Excellent recording, too. This score is more melodious than many of Bach's; it should please even those who find the majority of the old gentleman's output too methodically angular and mathematically repetitious for their taste. —A.W.P.

Editorial Notes

(Continued from page 1140)

und Leben, on two such discs. Short separate songs like these fit just as well on eight 10" sides. Luckily, their second choice was better; two long scenes from *Barber von Bagdad* with the excellent Georg Hann as the Barber. This is really magnificent! Now they have issued the complete Mendelssohn *Midsummer Night's Dream* music, including all the incidental songs that were never previously recorded, on four 9-minute discs. The technical term for this new type of recording is variable micrograde whatever that means."

The pro and con of LP will go on. The division of feeling in England is beginning to quiet down. The musicians are all for it, and several English artists with which we recently

spoke voiced their displeasure with the attitude of H.M.V. who seems to have retarded their first LP releases which were scheduled for November. One London engineer informs us that H.M.V. did not have the right facilities for manufacturing LPs and dissatisfaction with its first products caused them to abandon the project. It is also said that they had to ask for help from a rival concern. Meanwhile, more and more H.M.V. record buyers in this country are holding off to see which way the wind blows; after all, as one record buyer said recently; "why buy 78s if we can get the things we want in another three or six months on LP?" That's about the way most of the staff of this magazine feel.

* * *

We have grown accustomed to set-backs in the publishing field. But the unforeseen happened last month when a valued associate was stricken with paralysis in the middle of the month, necessitating extensive medical care and the consultation of over a dozen leading doctors. It held us up a week and then the storm hit and the electric wires came down, so most of the magazines were not shipped until the 27th of November.

While on the subject of shipping, let us point out that the October issue, mailed on the 19th, reached Chicago and Milwaukee readers on November 2nd. We aim to publish the middle of the month. The reason we do not come out earlier is that the bulk of the month's record releases arrive around the first. But record releases are not the only delays these days, for advertisers are often late with their copy. This seems to be a prevailing condition among most monthly publications these days; it was brought up and keenly discussed at a publishers' dinner recently in New York.

So, having shown our faith with our readers, we would like to end these random notes by wishing each and every one a "Truly Merry Christmas" and a "Healthy and Happy New Year." Though at this time of the year the wish is advanced by all our friends, such things are up to the individual and in times like these each person establishes his own joy and happiness in life. We still have freedom, opportunity, and potential progress in this land of ours which makes for happiness. Let us grasp it while we can.

Record Notes and Reviews

THERE IS IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs, or martial, brisk, or grave, some chord in unison with what we hear, is touched within us and the heart replies.

Orchestra

ADAM: Ballet Music from *Giselle*; Royal Opera House Orchestra, Covent Garden, conducted by Robert Irving. RCA Victor LP LM-1092, \$5.45.

▲THIS is the most generous portion of the music for *Giselle* that we have yet had. And that is not a bad situation. Granted that some of the melodic material and a few of the externally imposing sections seem tired and feeble, one must admit that this music is well made and that it is a perfect accompaniment for the stage action. Its power in the living room, I suspect, will be sustained, however, only while those memories of the great Giselles — Pavlova, Karsavina, Spessivtzeva, Markova, Alonso, and Shearer — dart through the listener's mind.

There have been better performances of most of this music available before (notably Constant Lambert's — Columbia 10" LP ML-2117), but Robert Irving's reading is competent enough and except for the occasionally poor unanimity of string playing (an unfortunate characteristic of almost all of the British orchestras one hears these days) everything sounds quite good. Surprisingly good, as a matter of fact, for Irving's recent work here with Sadler's Wells was anything but memorable. He proved himself, for that time at any rate, to be quite a better reader (he read the Gertrude Stein lines that accompany the Ashton-Lord Berners ballet, *Wedding Bouquet*) than an orchestral leader.

The recording and surfaces of this disc are first-rate. —C.J.L.

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 36*; Brussels Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Erich Kleiber. Capitol-Telefunken LP disc P-8116, \$4.85.

▲THIS PERFORMANCE dates from before the war and for its period is a fine recording. Kleiber seems to me to be a knowing interpreter for this music; he does not lose the continuity of impetus as in his more recent performance of Beethoven's *Seventh*. In recent times, we have had two wider-ranged issues of this symphony: the first a taut-sounding and in some ways an exciting reading by Reiner, the second a over-brilliant and too closely microphoned job from Monteux which, in my estimation, disrupted an elegant interpretation. It seems a pity that Beecham's performance is dated, for he gave the best account of this work on records, one which remains unexcelled for refinement and elaboration of detail. Kleiber comes closer to Reiner, but I would recommend his performance for its more desirable recording. He has, in my opinion, a better orchestra at his disposal than either Reiner or Monteux. The poorly contrived spacing of the work suggests it should have been placed on a 10" record. —P.H.R.

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 8 in F, Op. 93*; San Francisco Orchestra conducted by Pierre Monteux. RCA Victor 10" LP disc LM(X)-43, \$3.85.

▲DIRECTNESS, animation, elegance, and high spirits are characteristics of Pierre Monteux's enchanting reading of Beethoven's *Eighth Symphony*. These elements, seldom available simultaneously in the work of any

conductor interpreting Beethoven these days, can go far toward giving complete satisfaction even without such musical luxuries as complete shipshapeness of orchestral execution and super refinements of sound.

That is about the story of this recording. The San Francisco Orchestra, long under-budgeted, simply cannot afford to hire the top-grade first-desk wind and brass players that a first-rate symphonic organization must have. Those expensive accoutrements do not in my view preclude joyous music-making by any organization as this disc will, I believe, prove. I know I would not exchange this version of Beethoven's ever delightful Eighth for any other I can recall, though I would not mind having the Karajan-Vienna Philharmonic performance (English Columbia L.X.-988/90) around for its considerable musical and executive refinements. —C.J.L.

• **BERLIOZ:** *Harold In Italy* — *Symphony in Four Parts with Viola Solo*; **Guenther Breitenbach** (viola), **Vienna Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Prof. R. Moralt**. Vox LP disc PNL 6700, \$5.95.

▲ **THOUGH BERLIOZ'S ADMIRATION** for Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* motivated his composition of this symphony, there remains more Berlioz in the work than Byron. As Tovey tells us "nothing remotely resembling Berlioz's Pilgrims' March, nor his serenade in the Abruzzi," is to be found in Byron's poem. The genius of Berlioz for capturing the poetry of picturesque incidents is assuredly confirmed in this compelling work. Certainly, the Pilgrims' March (Byron or no Byron) was one of his happiest inspirations.

It is inevitable that the Primrose-Koussevitzky version of this symphony should be considered along with any other performance. With the resources of a virtuoso orchestra like the Boston Symphony and a soloist of such distinction, Koussevitzky's performance has much in its favor: for the noted conductor obtains an instrumental balance that would have gladdened the heart of Berlioz. However, his pacing of the work is wayward and the whole thing is polished to such a point that one remains more aware of the perfection of execution of the orchestra than the substance of the music. Prof. Moralt does not have as fine an orchestra nor as commanding a violist, but his pacing throughout the work is eminently correct. His Pilgrims'

March moves in the right spirit; there is none of the lethargy of Koussevitzky's pilgrims. Moralt's reading of this movement alone would recommend this disc to me. Koussevitzky is almost funereal at the opening of the Serenade, but not Moralt. Despite the fact that the balance between brasses and strings favors the former instruments in this new performance, a fault perhaps due to the recording or the size of the orchestra, Moralt communicates more of the poetic implications of the work than Koussevitzky. One could wish that Toscanini would record this score under ideal circumstances — perhaps at Manhattan Center in New York where the Stokowski and His Orchestra recordings are made. For Toscanini's interpretation of *Harold In Italy* remains unsurpassed.

The recording is quite satisfactory with a proper concert hall resonance. It is a more natural reproduction than that of the Boston Symphony which suffers from excessive reverberation. Readers interested in this music are urged to make a comparison before buying, and those owning the Boston performance would do well to hear this one. —P.H.R.

• **GABRIELI:** *Seven Canzonas*, for Single and Double Brass Choir; **New York Brass Ensemble** conducted by **Samuel Baron**. Esoteric LP disc 503, \$5.95.

▲ **IF YOU CAN AFFORD** to buy but one record this month, I would be tempted to nominate this release, which more than maintains the high standards set by Esoteric, as an outstanding musical experience. Performance, recording, and material, all must receive the highest marks.

Gabrieli, the teacher of Schuetz and Praetorius and one of the really great composers of sacred music, (along with Buxtehude, De La Lande, Eslava, Fr. Couperin and others) has never received the recognition due him — not so much as musical craftsman but as a recreator of human emotion, the undefinable element of timeless appeal that probes the inner workings of man's non-structural make-up and awakens a reciprocating appreciation of the composer's intentions, whatever the medium or style of writing employed.

Organist and choirmaster at St. Mark's in Venice from 1584 until his death in 1612, Gabrieli had a remarkable opportunity to develop his talents as a composer. Since St. Mark's has two organs and two choir lofts,

one on each side of the church, he was able to experiment with complicated scores for double choir, each group supplemented by organ and additional wind instruments. Unparalleled antiphonal effects are found in some of his scores, a number of which were divided into as many as 48 parts.

Gabrieli could, I suppose, be called "the father of instrumentation," for he is the first composer we know of who specified a particular instrument for each part he wrote. Previously it had been left to the discretion of the choirmaster to delegate his available forces for the best effect. In the *Sonata Pian e Forte* he was the first to differentiate between loud and soft, carefully marking the various passages for planned contrast. In this piece, which was once recorded by a French group under Curt Sachs (Anthologie Sonore disc No. 25), the scoring is most unusual, the treble part of the second choir being taken by a violin in the low register. The sudden appearance of its dark, alien sound against the bright blend of the brass is most moving.

If you find this sample of Gabrieli's writing agreeable, I suggest you look around for the Harvard Glee Club — Radcliffe Choral Society set (Victor M-928) which contains a number of choral pieces with brass and organ accompaniment. This is exceptionally powerful writing, technically very advanced for its day, but aside from all that, splendid listening. For sheer beauty of sound, however, it would be difficult to outdo two single discs of a *Benedictus*, for twelve voices, and a *Jubilate Deo*, for eight voices, sung by the Danish Broadcasting Madrigal Choir conducted by the talented Mogens Woeldike (Eng. Columbia DDX19 and 20). —A.W.P.

GLUCK: *Don Juan* (Pantomime ballet); Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Rudolph Moralt. Westminster LP disc WL 50-28, \$5.95.

▲THOUGH not too many people know this music at all, Gluck's *Don Juan* has an importance in the history of ballet rivaling that of *Orfeo* (composed one year later) in the development of opera. The composer, as he explained in another of those prefaces he loved to write, here attempted to infuse a new life into the ballet by restoring the ancient idea of pantomime, to tell in the dance a continuous and intelligible story in place of

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all the posturings and movements for their own sake which had made up the ballet of those times. It is a pity that in the otherwise informative notes by David Randolph which accompany this recording do not give us any clue as to the action as it might be traced in the music. Everyone, it must be assumed, knows the story of Don Juan, and that is all there is to it. In any case the music stands well enough on its own feet, and as it is done here it seems more of an entity than is usual in suites of eighteenth century dance movements.

Some years ago several sections of this score were recorded by a chamber orchestra under Hans von Benda (HMV EH 949). That disc served to introduce some of us to the work, though it was outstanding neither as a performance nor as reproduction. While perhaps a little heavy in the playing, this new full recording (I have not been able to check it with the score, but I assume it is virtually complete) is a vast improvement in every way, and it comes to life admirably in the fire and brimstone peroration. —P.L.M.

IVES: *Four Pieces for Orchestra; Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano; Trio — Largo; The Polymusic Chamber Orchestra, Vladimir Cherniavsky (conductor), Elliott Magaziner (violin), Frank Glazer (piano), David Weber (clarinet).* Polymusic LP disc PRLP 1001, \$5.95.

▲POLYMUSIC is a new company committed among other things to recording of a comprehensive series of the major works of Charles Ives. Last month, I reviewed a recording of Ives' *Third Symphony*, which I have long admired. Somehow the *Four Pieces for Orchestra* does not impress me as being as genuine as his symphony with its folk characteristics. These orchestral pieces titled, *Over the Pavements; The Unanswered Question; Hollowe'en; and Central Park in the Dark Some 40 Years Ago*, are not too clear in their implications. They assume the characteristics of improvisations, mostly astringent in style. *The Unanswered Question* owns the strongest and most convincing profile — it is a really beautiful piece — sustained and contemplative tonal writing. The rest seem experimentations in dissonant writing, unquestionably revolutionary for their time (opening decade of the century). The *Sonata*,

for violin and piano, dating from 1903, proves how bold an experimenter and innovator Ives was, but it too is uneven. For neither its melodic content nor its rhythmic complexities are sufficiently forceful to rate it as a major work. Its opening and closing movements are more honestly felt than its unbridled virtuosic second movement. The *Largo*, for violin, clarinet and piano, is appealing, but its close juxtaposition to the *Trio* is unfortunate.

The chamber orchestra is a very small but efficient pickup organization. The conductor seems sympathetic to the music. The most convincing artistry, however, lies in the sonata, and the *Largo* is well played though Weber's clarinet is somewhat submerged. Maybe the composer intended it this way. I wouldn't know. The recording is clean and natural in tone, but not suggestive of true concert hall resonance. —P.H.R.

MALIPIERO: *Symphony No. 7 — "Of Songs;"* and **BACH-CASELLA:** *Chaconne;* **Orchestra of Radio Italiana** conducted by **Dmitri Mitropoulos.** Cetra-Soria LP disc 50,044, \$5.95.

▲THE characteristic restlessness of the present time prevails in most of Malipiero's music, but in this work he seems to have been motivated more by songful utterance. Long fascinated with his music, I have taken from the air various works of his from time to time. The last large one, so acquired, was his *Symphony No. 4 (In Memoriam)* which Koussevitzky commissioned and performed in 1948; the work being dedicated to the conductor's wife, Natalie Koussevitzky. I must confess this latter opus remains enigmatic and frankly disturbing in its dissonant writing.

The present symphony is immediately accessible, being filled with the "neo-Romantic humanism" of its composer. It received its subtitle, Malipiero tells us, "because in it the counterpoint is perhaps secondary to the dominant line. The work is essentially linear, here or there a kind of 'song' emerges like the voice of a poet of old singing from the heights of Mount Grappa while beyond, far away, always farther away: Venice."

The music has the lyrical qualities of the Latin temperament of days goneby renewed

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in a spirit of our times. It is marked, like all of his work, by wealth and originality of invention. Mitropoulos plays it with evident relish and the recording is richly resonant.

Casella's arrangement of Bach's *Chaconne* for unaccompanied violin is more Casella than Bach. It is almost elephantine in its intensification of modern instrumentation. For my own part, I prefer Segovia's guitar arrangement to all others. —P.H.R.

MOZART: *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* (*Serenade in G, K. 525*). **HAYDN:** *Symphony No. 92 in G (Oxford)*. **Boston Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Serge Koussevitzky**. RCA Victor LP disc LM-1102, \$5.45.

▲OF THE COUNTLESS versions of Mozart's celebrated *Serenade in G* that have been preserved on records during the past twenty years, only Weingartner's (Columbia set X-187) has seemed in my view to combine those appropriate elements of luminous texture, rhythmic animation, exciting phraseology, and judicious pacing that display this work as the everlasting delight it is. Year after year one has waited for a recording that would be mechanically superior to the now ancient (by

present engineering standards) Weingartner discs coupled with a performance that would be worthy of the music. It just hasn't shown up. In the present recording Koussevitzky paces the first three sections well, blends and balances his tonal colors and weights to perfection, and keeps his admirable men continually on the mark. But except for a few moments in the second movement, there is little evidence of the sweet humanity, grace, and charm that are touchstones of this work's magic. And the *rondo* is taken as such a blinding speed that it almost becomes a musical mess. That everyone does manage to play it together is something of a triumph I suppose. But it is annoying to hear such good music used as a "see-how-fast-we-can-play" vehicle.

The "Oxford" Symphony is one of the very finest of Haydn's largescale works. It is so full of passionate gaiety and high spirits that it is difficult to make it seem dull. Koussevitzky, however, has managed it with the aid of stodgy tempi in the first two movements, rhythmic tenseness, and an apparent unawareness of the cumulative incandescent wit that animates the work. The Walter-Paris Conservatory Orchestra set (Victor M-692) is still

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the standard. The Szell-Cleveland Orchestra version (Columbia LP disc ML-4268) also makes some of its points. —C.J.L.

PROKOFIEFF: *Peter and the Wolf*, Op. 67; The Boston Symphony Orchestra with Eleanor Roosevelt (narrator) and Serge Koussevitzky (conductor). Victor 10" LP disc LM-45, \$4.45.

▲BEFORE TAKING THE RECORD out of the envelope, I glanced over the notes by chance. Instead of musical comments (not needed in this case) I found a complete account of Mrs. Roosevelt and the record session written with a "blow by blow" description by a Mr. Rudolph Elie of *The Boston Herald*. Mrs. Roosevelt, in my estimation, seems hardly the person requiring at this late day this type of publicity. To tell us that she was the only calm one at the record session, and further that everyone was awed, seems a rather obvious way to impress prospective customers for the record. Mr. Elie should become a press agent. His final tribute is really something, he says: "Three hours later they [the engineers] had the voice of Mrs. Roosevelt and the music of Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra on record for history's grandchildren. She was the only one, figuratively speaking, still on her feet."

What I heard, when I finally placed the record on my turntable, was the familiar voice of Eleanor Roosevelt, speaking simply in that precise manner I know so well. Her careful enunciation was the only reminder that she was concentrating on her script. Her personality, while present, in no way awed me, nor was I greatly impressed. How many of "history's grandchildren" will find her narration of *Peter and the Wolf* more desirable than, or as convincing as, the narration of Basil Rathbone, Richard Hale (who made the original recording with Koussevitzky some years back) or any of the other narrators, I would not dare predict. Mrs. Roosevelt is by no means the ideal storyteller, anymore than were the others who came before her. Somehow, I think a young person might be more convincing. Koussevitzky, who gets second billing despite his major position in this event, directs the music smoothly and carefully, his instrumental balance is perfection, but the spontaneity he

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obtained in his earlier version is missing. The recording is quite realistic. —P.H.R.

RAVEL: *La Valse*; Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by **Charles Munch**.

RCA Victor 45 rpm disc 49-1213, 95c.

▲FOR the unbelievable but true department — *La Valse* on a single disc! I cannot say whether RCA Victor or Munch was responsible for the pacing that had to be employed to make this music fit on two sides, but whoever it was has provided us with a very interesting experience.

At this quick tempo, *La Valse* hangs together better than I can ever before remember its doing. But at the same time there is less of the wonderful detail that Ansermet got in his performance for London. It would all be a mess, I suppose, if Munch's blending and balancing were not so precise and if the Bostonians' execution was anything shy of impeccable. As it is, this performance has its thrilling moments. The recording is outstanding. —C.J.L.

SAINT-SAËNS: *The Carnival of the Animals*; and RAVEL: *Mother Goose Suite*; Andre Kostelanetz and his Orchestra with **Noel Coward** (recitation) in the former. Columbia 12" LP disc ML4355, price \$4.85.

▲SOMEBODY down at Columbia Records had a brainstorm one day and came up with the brilliant notion of hiring Ogden Nash to write some descriptive verses to be spoken along with Saint-Saëns, delightful musical portfolio of zoological personalities. They were smart enough to engage Noel Coward to speak the verses, so that the impeccable elegance of his sophisticated delivery might make a stunning contrast with the homely puns and dry twists of Nash's very American rhymes. How can one go wrong with lines that begin:

"Camille Saint-Saëns was racked with pains

When people addressed him as 'Saint Sains'."

The only mistake they made down there at Columbia was in assigning their number one meal ticket, genial Andre Kostelanetz, to the podium for this enterprise. It is soon obvious that he is not musician enough to match the contributions of Saint-Saëns, Nash and Coward, but they carry the ball so magnificently

that his deficiencies can be overlooked. The music practically plays itself.

I have always been very pleased with this score, especially with the composer's idea that pianists be included in the list of animals described. Without reference to the score or program notes, though, it was sometimes a bit difficult to remember the titles of all the various sections. Mr. Nash has taken care of this detail in wizard fashion; the result is highly recommended.

The *Mother Goose* reading on the reverse was reviewed as a 78 rpm release in the October 1949 issue. Tonally it sounds even better on LP, though the same reservations concerning the interpretation are in force.

—A.W.P.

STRAUSS: *Aus Italien* (Symphonic Fantasy), Op. 16; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by **Henry Swoboda**. Westminster disc WL 50-32, \$5.95.

▲THE ENTERPRISING Dr. Swoboda revived Strauss's *Macbeth*, and how he turns to Strauss's early Italian symphony (or symphonic fantasy) written after the composer's visit to Italy in his twenty-second year. *Aus Italien* is a work full of youthful verve and sentiment. It has a fine opening movement, an early depiction in music of dawn arising over the Campagna outside of Rome, and one of the most beautiful poetic pictures Strauss ever devised in its third movement, *On the Shores of Sorrento*. The finale is a sort of orgy paraphrasing Neapolitan life, even to the use of a familiar ditty (which it is said Neapolitans were singing everywhere in 1886) — *Funiculi, funicula*. This has been a long neglected score which deserves to be heard more often. There is a certain youthful audacity in this music which shocked the converts to Wagner and Liszt when it was first played. Today, it marks the beginning of the long line of Strauss' famous tone poems and doesn't by a long shot deserve to be buried under the lot. He wrote an *Alpensinfonie* twenty-nine years later (1915) which surpassed anything before it in orchestral elaboration, but there wasn't the thematic inspiration which is found in this score.

Swoboda's performance is an efficient one though some of his climaxes don't quite come off as I expected them to. He seems a bit overwhelmed in the wild finale but he doesn't let the music get out of hand. One can,

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however, be grateful to him for preparing and recording this work, which I feel sure he admires greatly. —J.N.

SCHUBERT: *Symphony No. 2 in B Flat; Boston Symphony Orchestra* conducted by **Charles Munch.** RCA Victor 10" LP disc LM-41, \$4.45.

▲OF THE FIRST SIX symphonies Schubert composed, the Second, written when he was but eighteen, seems to me to anticipate more than the others the master that is revealed to us in the great C Major. It is a lively, warm-hearted work conceived along the lines of a Haydn symphony with passages of characteristic Schubertian charm in the second movement, of surprising, individual power in the *presto vivace* finale.

Munch's interpretation of this work is notable for its clarity, its detail, and a certain exuberant athleticism. He drives the first movement a bit hard, however, and takes the finale at an excessively deliberate pace. And there is everywhere a noticeable deficiency of abandon on the one hand and of ease and warmth on the other. It appears that Munch is a trifle uncomfortable with the work's expressive content and is never entirely able to take it easy.

The recording, except for some sharpness in the violins, is satisfactory, and the surfaces are very quiet. —C.J.L.

STRAVINSKY: *Apollon Musagete and Concerto Grosso in D; Igor Stravinsky* conducting the **RCA Victor Orchestra.** RCA Victor LP LM-1096, \$5.45.

▲GEORGE BALANCHINE, now resident choreographer of the enterprising New York City Ballet, and Igor Stravinsky composed *Apollon Musagete* for the Diaghileff company in 1928. It was an immediate success and endures today in the repertory of Ballet Theatre under the title of *Apollo*. Its subject is the power of poetry, as Edwin Denby says, "poetry in the sense of a brilliant, sensuous, daring, and powerful activity of our nature. It depicts the birth of Apollo in a prologue; then how Apollo was given a lyre, and tried to make it sing; how three muses appeared and showed each her special ability to delight; how he then tried out his surging strength; how he danced with Terpsichore, and how her loveliness and his strength responded in touching harmony; and last,

how all four together were inspired and felt the full power of the imagination; and then in calm and with assurance left for Parnassus, where they were to live."

Balanchine has told this metaphysical story in the concrete terms of classic dancing, and Stravinsky has used only strings and certain elements of the baroque classical musical art to complement the stage action. At one time this score was considered among Stravinsky's most important works, but time and other exponents of the Russian master's superlative theatrical style have helped to dim its pristine luster. The piece is made of solid materials, to be sure, and it still is a lovely accompaniment to the wonderfully imaginative Balanchine choreography; but as heard on this phonograph record it is less than a memorable musical or emotional experience.

The *Concerto Grosso in D* dates from 1946. In spite of its liveliness and jollity, it resembles all too much a Stravinsky pot boiler.

Both performances are characteristic of Stravinsky's clean outlining of rhythm and phraseology and his careful attention to

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dynamics. The RCA Victor Orchestra performs its duties well enough.

The recording is a peculiar one. It has sufficient resonance at times, at others it is as dead as Toscanini's late studio 8-H. It is, shameful that there are no wrapper notes for two works as little known as these — C.J.L.

STRAVINSKY: *The Fire Bird — Suite*; Leopold Stokowski and His Orchestra. Victor 10" LP disc LM 44, \$4.45.

▲IF YOU DON'T SUCCEED the first time, try, try, again! Stokowski has had four swings at Stravinsky's most popular score — with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the All-American Youth, the NBC Symphony, and now "His Orchestra." Of course, by now, everybody knows "His Orchestra" is a pickup group from the cream of symphony players in New York. The line of first desk men in this ensemble (given on the disc cover) is most imposing. Nobody knows what he wants to get and how to get it better than Stokowski. In 1937, he achieved miracles in sound with his Philadelphia recording. Don't get the idea that engineers alone accomplish such tonal wonders; Stokowski knows a great deal about reproduction and the arrangement of an orchestra to get the best results in a recording. Manhattan Center in New York, where this recording was made, has almost ideal acoustics as this disc proves. Every instrument is clearly heard and the balance of ensemble is truly amazing. Never before have we heard the arpeggio passages for horns in the finale so realistically reproduced.

Stokowski seems less wayward in his latest performance of this work, and he does not make the cut he made in his other versions. This is a complete performance of the 1920 suite which Stravinsky arranged (published by J. W. Chester Ltd.). I cannot say when I have heard this music played more beautifully; every detail, every nuance is brought out. —J.N.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Aurora's Wedding*; Royal Opera Orchestra, Covent Garden, London, conducted by Warwick Braithwaite. M.G.M. 10" LP disc, E-524, \$3.85.

▲A CATALOG of this performance's technical misdemeanors would fill a column. A similar list of Braithwaite's outright blunders in pacing, in attacking, in balancing would fill half of another. The orchestra utilized for

this recording is too small for an ideal projection of this charming excerpt from *The Sleeping Beauty*, and what there is of it (I judge no more than 45 pieces) is undisciplined and uneven in quality. The recording is far too good for everyone concerned. —C.J.L.

Concerto

BEETHOVEN: *Concerto No. 2 in B flat, Op. 19*; Heinz Schröter (piano) and the Bavarian Radio Orchestra conducted by Hans Altmann. Mercury 10" LP disc MG-15013, \$3.85.

BEETHOVEN: *Concerto No. 5 in E flat, Op. 73 (Emperor)*; Victor Schioler (piano) and the Danish State Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Carl Garguly. Mercury LP disc MG-10060, \$4.85.

GRIEG: *Concerto in A minor, Op. 16*; Victor Schioler (piano) and the Danish State Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Erik Tuxen. Mercury 10" LP disc MG-15012, \$3.85.

▲THIS TRIO OF STANDARD PIANO CONCERTOS (if the relatively little-played Beethoven *B flat* can be considered a standard) has certain points of interest. Victor Schioler has concertized in this country, receiving, on the whole, favorable reviews. Schroeter is a stranger to these parts, and so is conductor Garguly. Erik Tuxen, however, is scheduled to guest-conduct the Philadelphia Orchestra during the present season.

I happened to hear Schioler's Carnegie Hall concert, and his playing of the Grieg and *Emperor* confirms the impression I then received. Schioler is a sensitive pianist with a good, though far from outstanding, technical equipment. He is at his best in the lyric side of the repertoire, forcing somewhat in his endeavor to encompass the dramatic side. Thus the recording of the Grieg, not unexpectedly, is superior to his Beethoven. In the pretty Grieg concerto there is not only flexibility but a really artistic shaping of phrases. Schioler sings out the melodies nicely, more intent upon the music than upon himself. That is a rarity these days, because the Grieg has turned into a virtuoso's stomping ground, banged out like a military march. I like Schioler's understatements here, and his modest musical approach.

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Ⓢ Record ML 4288 or 78 rpm set MM-905

Saint-Saëns: Concerto No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 61, Zino Francescatti, violin, Dimitri Mitropoulos conducting.

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But modesty and understatement do not work in the *Emperor* concerto, which is another cup of tea entirely. Here the pianist needs grasp and power, broad strokes and a big outline. Schioler plays neatly, but it's like driving a railroad spike with a toy hammer when a sledge is needed. It is of course in the slow movement that his best traits are shown. The first movement, however, is the key to the work, and it cannot be said that Schioler makes of the music what several recording pianists have done in the past.

Both of these discs are good examples of recorded sound — much better than the Schröter-Altmann Beethoven No. 2. In that disc the balance is not too good, the recording level is a little low, and there are some extraneous noises. The performance itself is quite good. Schröter appears to be a musicianly pianist with a fine grasp of the notes and a healthy respect for the composer's intentions. He is well backed by Altmann. It is too bad that inferior recording has negated an otherwise excellent performance. —H.C.S.

MOZART: *Concerto in A major for Clarinet and Orchestra, K. 622; Reginald Kell and the Zimblar Sinfonietta.* Decca 10" LP disc DL 7500, \$3.85.

▲DOMESTIC DECCA has entered the field of classics with two recordings made in Boston by Josef Zimblar and his Sinfonietta which augur well for future releases (see also Hindemith: *The Four Temperaments*). It is especially appreciable to hear this Mozart concerto performed by a chamber group, rather than a large orchestra, though it must be said the emphasis lies on the soloist whose over-ripe and rich clarinet playing is not quite ideally suited to an intimate ensemble. Kell's artistry, however, is of the highest order, tonally beautiful and technically perfect. Yet, it should be noted, he played this concerto ten years ago in England with Sargent and the London Philharmonic (Victor set 708) with a wider variety of expressive feeling than he does here. Today, his style is more sophisticated and super-refined, as Mr. Peckham noted in connection with his review of the player's versions of Brahms' clarinet sonatas (see June 1950 issue). One is drawn between admiration for the finer qualities of Zimblar's sinfonietta performance and the lesser ones of Sargent's full orchestral one. In a final analysis, I think this performance may win out, but

the decision may be a highly personal one.

This concerto is one of Mozart's finest works, written three months before his untimely death. Like his other clarinet works, it reveals an astonishing grasp of the instrument's character. The music, while touchingly beautiful, is never cloying in its poetic sentiment.

The recording fares best with a 900 bass turnover (which means turning up the bass control higher than usual for those who have no record compensating device). Tonally, the sound is realistic and resonantly satisfactory. —P.H.R.

Chamber Music

BORODIN: *Quartet No. 1 in A major; Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet.* Westminster LP disc WL 50-35, \$5.95.

▲BORODIN'S second string *Quartet in D major* has long been a popular work, and one of its movements — the *Nocturne* — has been widely played on its own. It is difficult to understand the neglect of his first string quartet which is a far finer opus. Some years back, I first became acquainted with the *A major Quartet* through a private group of proficient amateur and professional players. Knowing Borodin only as a composer of the Nationalistic style, I was amazed to find his first string quartet one of the most classical of late 19th-century compositions, full of rhythmic life and vitality, with manifold richness in its contrapuntal writing. Influenced by a theme from Beethoven, it proves a point that Borodin's creative urge was strong enough and sufficiently individual to utilize another man's theme without permitting it to disrupt his own originality.

The *A major Quartet* has greater and more enduring appeal than the *D major*, and I feel certain that chamber music enthusiasts will welcome its performance in this fine recording. It has been my privilege to write the program notes, in which the inclusion of two musical illustrations from the first movement have been unfortunately reversed by the printer. Those who acquire the record should note this fact. To describe this work in detail would take extensive space; suffice it to say its four

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movements are technically masterful and lyrically ingratiating, the four voices beautifully balanced and tellingly exploited for contrast in color and intensity of expression. The slow movement is of exceptional interest with its dreamy, meditative mood anticipating the slow movements of the Debussy and Ravel quartets; and the scherzo is a little gem of its kind with its elfin fantasy.

The Vienna Concert House Quartet give an appreciable performance of this music. Their style of playing is smooth with a well blended quality of tone, but lacking a bit in contrasting soaring of line and volume. But their simple and gracious approach to the music produces an appreciable rendition, which becomes the more valuable because it is the only recorded performance of a great work that has been shamefully neglected.

—P.H.R.

BRAHMS: *Trio in E flat for Horn, Violin and Piano, Opus 40; Jean Devémy (horn), Georges Ales (violin) and Annie d'Arco (piano).* Mercury 10" LP disc MG 15015, \$3.85.

▲THIS DISC has only a certain curiosity value to commend it. If perchance one were interested to hear how a Parisian hornist would go about tackling the Brahms *Trio*, one might want to listen to it once.

I only hope that students of the horn have sense enough not to be influenced by the wobbly, nasal sounds of N. Devémy. They are a travesty of the true horn tone, not to mention that they are completely alien to the composer's intentions.

One has only to compare a short section of the ancient but still very listenable Aubrey Brain-Busch-Serkin album (Victor M-199) which, if unobtainable on domestic labels, was still around the shops a year or so ago in the H.M.V. pressings (DB105/8). Brain, a stand-out exception to the usual breed of British hornists, not only had a sweet sound but also a profound understanding of the tempi, phrasing and rubato treatment which, tastefully applied, make this score one of Brahms's most rewarding efforts. —A.W.P.

HINDEMITH: *Quartet No. 1 in F minor, Op. 10 (1919); Stuyvesant String Quartet.* Philharmonia Record Corp. 10" LP disc 100, \$3.85.

HINDEMITH: *The Four Temperaments (Theme and Four Variations) (1940); Lukas*

Foss (piano) with Zimmler String Sinfonietta. Decca 10" LP disc DL7501, \$3.85.

▲TWO INTERESTING ASPECTS of Hindemith's art from widely separated periods. The early string quartet, while bearing "the stamp of the oldest traditions of German art," is rhythmically more difficult, though emotionally it is more conventional than his later works in the form. Indeed, this is one of this adroit composer's most accessible quartets, revealing an equal balance of the heart and mind. As the annotator says "themes of clear tonality, almost vocal in style and romantic in spirit, form the raw material of the quartet." Despite its technical complexities, the music accentuates har-

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monic coloring. I can recommend this work to all chamber music enthusiasts. It is excellently recorded and performed with conviction, genuine sympathy and technical assurance.

The *Four Temperaments*, for piano soloist and chamber orchestra (which also serves as music for Balanchine's ballet production) derives in no way from German romanticism, but from what some writers have termed an archaism in the composer's later musical style — reflections of devices from the music of the latter part of the Middle Ages. Its polyphonic texture and rhythmic patterns are ingenious and diverting, though emotionally it is less penetrating than the quartet above. The four temperaments are taken from theories prevalent among physicians in the 16th and 17th centuries regarding what constituted man's physical and mental well-being. Hindemith's four variations, based on an exceptionally long and involved theme, are marked, Melancholic, Sanguine, Phlegmatic, and Choleric. Those who enjoy following a score will find mental stimulation in the composer's technical ingenuities, which is not intended to imply a lack of expression in the musical feeling. The work is no way unpleasantly dissonant. Its performance is competently and communicatively projected, with admirably sensitive artistry from the pianist, Lukas Foss. The recording fares best with a 900 turnover in the bass, otherwise its tonal quality is edgy in sound.

—P.H.R.

RAVEL: *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (1920), and *Trio in A minor* (1915); **Arnold Eidus** (violin), **George Ricci** (cello), and **Brooks Smith** (piano). Stradivari Records LP disc SLP 1005, \$5.95.

▲THE RAVEL SONATA, new to records, is a more sophisticated opus than his *Trio* — which is unquestionably his greatest chamber composition. The sonata's opening movement has reserve and dignity, characteristic of the composer, but the second movement finds him turning Gershwin on us. It is a highly sensitive Gallic composer's feeling for Negroid American *Blues*. Its finale, while using thematic material from the previous movements, has some of the characteristics of a *molto perpetuum*.

There is a grandeur and nobility of expression in the *Trio*, a poetic sensitivity and stylistic refinement that bespeaks the highly cul-

tured artist. Its introspective opening movement has that ironic sweetness of thought and feeling which we find in some of his piano and orchestral pieces and in the Quartet, and its third movement — a *passacaglia* — recalls what one of his countrymen said about him, "Ravel is not a manufacturer of music, but an artist enamoured of forms and ideas." Its dignity and beauty have never ceased to impress. The second and fourth movements, in quick time, are perfect foils to the others.

The performances of these works are musically proficient and emotionally satisfying. One has the feeling that the players are in intuitive touch with each other's minds, an essential to the good of Ravel's chamber music as the English critic, Edwin Evans, once pointed out. The recording is well balanced in both works, tonally good though lacking in the fullest resonance found in other recordings of these days. It is more satisfying in the slow movements than the quick ones, but this did not deter my enjoyment of the music and the generally exceptional artistry.

—P.H.R.

SCHOENBERG: *Verklaerte Nacht* (original version); **The Hollywood String Quartet** with **Alvin Dinkin** (viola) and **Kurt Reher** (cello). Capitol 10" LP disc L-8118, \$3.85.

▲AFTER playing this exquisite performance of the original version of Schoenberg's discursive but frequently touching *Verklaerte Nacht*, I turned to the recent Ormandy-Philadelphia Orchestra disc (Columbia LP ML-4316). When I finished with this equally beautiful performance, I felt very much like a lady of my acquaintance who once remarked, "When I hear the original version of *Verklaerte Nacht*, I often wish I were hearing the string orchestra transcription. When I hear the orchestral version, I wish I were hearing the original version."

My private fancy and the acceptance of both versions by musicians and the lay public makes me feel that both are valid ways of portraying nature and expressing human emotions. In the more climactic sections of the score, particularly in the first part, I think that Schoenberg's large conception of equally large passions is most effective in the orchestral transcription. In the more intimate passages and in those in which there is a welter of accompanying figuration, I prefer the original product.

If the original has any edge on the orchestral version, it is that the sound of the sextet does not leave one as ear-weary as the transcription sometimes does. Moreover, the original version (perhaps for the above reason) does not leave the listener with such a clear feeling of the work's length.

The Capitol recording is good, but I would prefer a bit more resonance. The surfaces are noisy in spots. Schoenberg's notes and his choice of actual musical quotations on the folder are admirable and a boon to those who would like to follow the story of the poem that the music comments on. This recording, by the way, was prepared under the personal supervision of the composer.

—C.J.L.

SCHUBERT: Quintet in C Major, Op. 163; Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet with Gunther Weiss (2nd. cello). Westminster LP disc WL50-33, \$5.95.

▲THIS DISC represents an excellent test case for judging the virtues and malfeasances of chamber groups that practice the German Romantic style of playing. The Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet and Mr. Weiss perform with solemn feelings, a restricted tonal-color palette, and a wide dynamic range. Their work is rarely light, clean, or sweet in sound or invariably accurate in chord balances; but it has an inwardness of expression, a broad sincerity, and no little animal warmth.

It is well known among musicians that to achieve this effect one must be very free with rhythm. The use of this expressive device is, however, dangerous — especially when it is employed with varying degrees of effectiveness throughout such a lengthy work as the Schubert *C Major Quintet*.

In their most telling moments — the superb opening section of the *Adagio*, for example — the Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet evokes a depth of expression that is as uncommon as it is beautiful. At their less than best — the opening movement and a portion of the powerful *Allegretto — alla breve* finale — these musicians make the music sound interminable. And that is certainly not Schubert's fault in this work, his chamber masterpiece. The *C Major Quintet* has a solid structure (unlike some of Schubert's other lengthy works), a grand continuity, and a super abundance of the most majestic and touching beauties.



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The previous notable versions of this music have been the Budapest's and the Pro Arte's. The Budapest's handsome musicality never quite overcame its slight deficiencies in tonal and expressive coloration and its most unnatural and unpleasant recording. The Pro Arte performance, on the other hand, has better engineering and a musical appeal to the mind, the ear, and the sentiments that somewhat overshadowed occasional questionable pacing. The superb Westminster recording and the blessings of LP are persuasive equalizers, but I think I would have to rank the Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet performance (even with full awareness of its most moving work fresh in the memory) a very close third in the competition.

—C.J.L.

Voice

BACH: *Cantata 78: Jesu, der du meine Seele; Clothilde Schmidt* (soprano) *Maria Engelhardt* (contralto), *Richard Brünner* (tenor), *Ernst Conrad Haase* (baritone), *Bavarian Radio Choir and Chamber Orchestra*, conducted by *Josef Kugler*. Mercury MG 15010, 10" LP disc, \$3.85.

▲THIS SEEMS to be the Bach Cantata of the hour, for besides this recording it has also recently been made available by Concert Hall (CHC 59) in a performance of the Rheinart Chorus and Winterthur Orchestra. I mention this simply as a bit of information; I have not as yet heard that recording. To complete the background, there is an older version, sung in English, by the Bethlehem Bach Choir (Victor M-1045) no longer listed in the catalogue, and Columbia once offered a charming record of the duet, *Wir eilen mit schwachen doch ensigen Schritten* sung as a two-part chorus by the Rheinart group (68228D).

As so often happens in such performances as this one, the best work is done by the chorus and orchestra. The magnificent opening, with its restlessness and its chaconne structure, is clear and full in sound, if a bit too bright. The priceless duet, mentioned above, fares less well, for the two soloists are none too steady and they make real work of the descriptive ascending scale-passages. The

trouble may be partly a matter of microphone placement, for they seem rather close — the compensation being that the words stand out very clearly. The tenor, whose recitative and aria come next, carries on in the same laborious tradition, but the bass, happily is better. Returning for comparison to the Bethlehem set I find the larger American choir performing in true festival style. They use a piano instead of the harpsichord favored by the Germans. The two male soloists — the female duet is sung by the chorus — are certainly superior, especially the baritone, Mack Harrell. But as the German performance is more authentically planned, the choral parts are better, and it has the advantages of LP, I give it my vote.

—P.L.M.

BACH: *Johannes-Passion; Gisela Rathauscher* (soprano); *Elfriede Hofstaetter* (contralto); *Ferry Gruber* (tenor); *Rudolf Kreuzberger* (tenor); *Walter Berry* (basso); *Leo Hepp* (basso); *Harald Buchbaum* (basso); *Fritz Uhl* (basso); *Guenther Breitenbach* (viola d'amore); *Karl Troetzmueller* (viola d'amore); *Nikolaus Huebner* (viola da gamba); *Bruno Seidlhofer* (cembalo); *Karl Wollleitner* (organ); *Akademie Kammerchor and Vienna Symphony Orchestra*, conducted by *Ferdinand Grossmann*. Vox PL 6650, 3 LP discs, \$18.80.

BACH: *Weihnachts-Oratorium; Marta Schilling* (soprano), *Ruth Michaelis* (contralto), *Werner Hohmann* (tenor), *Bruno Mueller* (basso), *Andrea Stefan-Wendling* (violin), *Adolf Kassa* (trumpet), *Hans Sperling* (oboe), *Fritz Pfeiffer* (oboe), *Eva Hoelderlin* (organ), *Stuttgart Choral Society and Suebian Symphony Orchestra*, conducted by *Hans Grischkat*. Renaissance SX 201, four LP discs, \$23.80.

▲WRITING IN THESE PAGES LAST MAY, on the occasion of the Bach Bi-Centennial, I noted that among the greater works only the *Saint John Passion* and the *Christmas Oratorio* remained to be recorded, and I expressed the hope that this festal year would furnish the occasion for remedying this situation. Not only has this happened, but while the Vox-Polydor recording of the *Saint John* is under consideration, we have the Victor advance publicity promising us an English performance in the near future. Without the

possibility of making a comparison at this time, those to whom the language of the performance is a paramount issue can make their choice on the basis of this much information.

The *Saint John Passion* has always been unfortunately overshadowed by the longer and more demanding *Saint Matthew*. For some reason, even in church choirs, where nothing like a complete and authentic performance could be so much as considered, abbreviated versions of what has been acknowledged the greater work have crowded the lesser out, so that only in recent years it has received some of its due appreciation.] Perhaps its highest flights are not quite so high as those of the latter work, but there is a school of thought — supported by some important scholars and musicians — that claims for the *Saint John* a more exalted level of sustained inspiration. But this hardly matters; it is a masterpiece, and those who have come to know it are never bothered by the dangerous similarity in style and subject matter to its more famous work.

It may be said at once that a standard has been set which the Shaw performance will do well to surpass. As a recording, and as a presentation of the score, I find the whole more satisfactory than the *Saint Matthew* released by Vox last spring. The choruses are clean and tonally impressive, the orchestra excellent. Of the soloists I like especially the rich, smooth and neat singing of the contralto, Elfriede Hofstaetter, and I cannot but admire the delivery of the light-voiced Ferry Gruber as the Evangelist. Kreuzberger is also admirable in the tenor arias, and all the basses are well above average — especially the warm but agile Mr. Berry. In fact the virtues of the performance are so patent that it is difficult to discuss them. As for its weakness — that is easily summed up. Everything is a little too business-like. The tempi incline to be fast, and the transition from one section to another is always handled with such dispatch that the listener has hardly time to readjust. Consequently the whole performance doesn't mean enough. Matters such as the *fermatas* in the chorales, sometimes observed, sometimes not, and the *appoggiaturas*, especially in the great aria *Es ist vollbracht* cannot be thoroughly discussed here. Suffice it to say that this is an admirable if rather workmanlike performance, excellently reproduced.

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the *Christmas Oratorio* have erred in another direction. If the tempi of the *Johannes-Passion* are too brisk, those of the *Weihnachts-Oratorium* are too slow. Could it be that the performers were brought together with insufficient preparations? There is no lack of talent surely: chorus and orchestra acquit themselves well, if we accept the conductor's over-accentuation, and the soloists have agreeable voices. Again it is the alto, Ruth Michaelis, who shines brightest, both in tone and in style. The bass, too, is generally excellent, with a tone quality reminiscent of Schorr, though he is of the school that believes in aspirating the individual notes of a run. Mr. Hohlmann as the Evangelist sounds well, but you could set a metronome by his singing of the recitatives. The reproduction is uneven, and I found it necessary to make frequent readjustments in the setup of my controls. The first two sides were the least satisfactory both in clarity and in steadiness of pitch. Perhaps the prevailing lack of variety and shading should be blamed on the engineers — in any case it is an unfortunate flaw. We can only regret while so expensive a project was being undertaken that these not insuperable difficulties had been ironed out.

—P.L.M.

HINDEMITH: *A Requiem* ("For those we love;" Elisabeth Höngen (mezzo-soprano), Hans Braun (baritone), Vienna State Opera Chorus and Vienna Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Paul Hindemith. Vox set PNL 1760, 2 10" discs, \$7.70.

▲THIS, in case the reader has not guessed, is Hindemith's setting of Walt Whitman's *When lilacs last in the dooryard bloomed*, written for Robert Shaw and the Collegiate Chorale, and first performed by them at the New York City Center, May 14, 1946. The date is significant, for although the requiem is designated simply "for those we love," there is an obvious parallel between the occasion of Whitman's writing after the Civil War in memory of Lincoln and the so well remembered events that give Hindemith's music its background.

I was deeply moved by that first performance. Hindemith, it seemed, had added something important to musical Americana; his choice of perhaps the most most American of our poets, and his subtle if rather personal

way of setting the text were a tribute to his adopted country. No one could ever question this composer's mastery of the means of musical expression — beyond any question he stands almost alone in our time as a complete and universal musician. Those who have seen something of his work in early music at Yale can only marvel at his secure position among the creative modernists. This work throws a certain light upon what might appear thus to be a dual personality. Here is no dry and academic exercise, but a sincere and powerful expression. The musical craft is concealed by the message of the poet and composer.

It is odd to hear such a piece sung in German. Hindemith himself, we are told, made the translation, and if one follows the recording with the English score one must be rather amazed at how closely the German follows the original. It hardly needs saying that the work is well performed, for Hindemith is an inspirational conductor, and musicians work with him. He is fortunate in the two soloists, who sing with fine voices and understanding. Since the recording was taken on tape at a public performance, we may expect the inequalities that so often result from such a setup. Be it said simply that the reproduction is uneven. What is important is that an outstanding work has been made available to us. Short of an equally expressive performance in English we would be ungrateful to ask more.

—P.L.M.

MOZART (ed. Wolf Ferrari): *Idomeneo* (Abridged version); Franz Klarwein (Idomeneo), Gottfried Riedner (Idamante), Marianne Schech (Elettra), Maude Cunliffe (Ilia), Heinz Maria Lins (Arbaces), Kurt Messerschmidt (High Priest), Maximilian Eibel (Voice of the Oracle), Bavarian Radio Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Hans Altmann. Mercury set MGL5, 2 LP discs, \$11.90.

▲THIS IS A TRUNCATED VERSION of Mozart's famous *opera seria*, which, after acquaintance with the Haydn Society performance of the complete opera, proves far from convincing. Despite the arguments of the annotator that the late Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari in this edition of the score aimed for a swifter dramatic action, the loss of many of the important recitatives which pointed up the dramatic action gives the proceedings a

sort of kaleidoscopic effect like a movie that has been badly cut. I fully realize that some listeners prefer abridged versions of operas to complete ones, and I would not deter those, so minded, to neglect this recording. There is some fine singing in this set and some which is not quite equal to what we hear in the Haydn Society issue. Artistic honors are about equal. While I consider it a sensible procedure to give the role of Idamante to a tenor (discussion of this can be found in my review of the Haydn Society set, September issue, page 9), the character of the voice should prove a better foil to the tenor of Idomeneo than it does here. The lack of a wider variety in the choice of voices for this opera was undoubtedly occasioned by available artists at the time Mozart wrote this work, and it might well prove to be a highly difficult business for any impresario to select the ideal cast.

The use of a German text, as in this performance, seems less ideally suited to the music, but that is perhaps a moot argument. Actually, the present singers are more at home in the German text than several of the Haydn Society ones were in Italian. As a recording, this is well engineered, as indeed are most of Mercury's products. A libretto with a reasonable translation is provided with the set, though some discrepancies exist which should have been cleared up. —P.H.R.

MOZART: *Vesperae solennes de Confessore*, K. 339; **Valerie Bak** (soprano), **Hanne Münch** (contralto), **Richard Brünner** (tenor), **Heinz Maria Linz** (baritone), **Bavarian Radio Choir and Orchestra**, conducted by **Joseph Kugler**. Mercury 10" LP disc, MG 15014, \$3.85.

▲THIS VESPER SERVICE is the last work Mozart wrote as part of his official duties as Kapellmeister at Salzburg Cathedral. Dating from 1780, this set of five *Psalms* and the *Magnificat* is a good example of his mature if not too churchly choral style. Especial interest attaches to the *Laudate pueri* section, a fugue that recalls, with its downward skip of a diminished seventh, the Mozart *Requiem* and Handel's *Messiah*, among other things. I suppose many of us have wondered what this entire work would be like ever since we became acquainted with the *Laudate Dominum* — which we may have done by means of the several recordings it has enjoyed. One of

these, made many years ago by the Berlin Philharmonic Chorus and Orchestra under Siegfried Ochs and featuring the soprano voice of Ursula Van Diemen, has long been especially treasured by those who know it. Perhaps because of the very beauty of that performance we listen to the whole service with something like disappointment. Of course, it was hardly to be expected that the miracle would happen again in the *Laudate*, and it might have been guessed that this section is easily the outstanding moment in the work. Nevertheless, it is good to have this disc for study and contemplation, and there are other things in it to admire. One wonders why the *Magnificat* has not found its way into the American church repertoire. The performance presented (complete with page turnings and some coughing) is acceptable if not outstanding. The soloists are no more than passable, and the chorus sings with more enthusiasm than warmth. —P.L.M.

ROSSINI: *La Cenerentola* (Abridged version); **Cesare Valletti** (Don Ramiro), **Saturno Meletti** (Dandini), **Cristiano Dalamangas** (Don Magnifico), **Giuletta Simonato** (Cenerentola), **Ornella Rovero** (Clorinda), **Miti Truccato Pace** (Tisbe), **Vito Susa** (Alidoro), **Orchestra and Chorus of Radio Italiana** conducted by **Mario Rossi**. Cetra-Soria set 1208, 2 LP discs, \$11.90.

▲UNFAMILIARITY with this delightful comic opera by the inimitably effervescent Rossini leaves me uncertain just how much of musical consequence is left out in this abridged version. There are abrupt transitions in the story and similar changes of mood in the musical sequence, but the latter are more annoying than the former. What we get, I suspect, is the better part of the opera and I imagine opera fans will soon adjust themselves to the necessary hurdles that the musical breaks require.

Rossini's *Cenerentola* (the Italian for Cin-

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derella), one of a number of operas based on the famous fairy tale, is both plausible and believable as the librettist omits all magical elements from the story. The wealthy Prince of Salerno has been commanded by his dying father to marry at once, or be disinherited. In deciding to look the field over, he changes clothes with his valet. Alidoro, a philosopher in the services of the Prince, discovers in the home of an impoverished noble, Don Magnifico, the neglected daughter Cinderella, who of course has two ugly stepsisters. It is he who helps her to marry the prince. The incongruous glass slipper is wisely omitted.

Musically, this opera is full of humor and sparkle. There is no need for any profundity of feeling and Rossini wisely adheres to elative and bubbling melodies, florid in style, with some not unwelcome echoes from *The Barber*, which he wrote a year earlier.

The singing in this performance is uneven. Simonato is the true star with an amazingly agile and vibrant mezzo-soprano voice and a real flair for the Rossini style. The Prince, Cesare Valletti, has an agreeable middle voice but his upper tones are as sharp as the pickets on an iron fence. Dalamangas, as the father of the three girls that compete for the Prince's favor, and Saturno Meletti, as the valet, are trustworthy artists with agreeable voices. The rest of the cast is competent but hardly first-rate. Rossi's lively and well paced or-

chestral direction gives this recording a distinction it might not otherwise have had. The reproduction is realistic but uneven in levels of volume. —J.N.

OLD VIENNA: *Im Prater blüh'n wieder die Bäume* (Stolz); *Yours is my heart alone* (Lehár); *Wien, du Stadt meiner Träume* (Sieczynski); *I'm in love with Vienna* (Strauss); *The Merry Widow Waltz* (Lehár); *Love's Roundelay* (O. Straus); **Helen Traubel** (soprano) and **RCA Victor Orchestra** conducted by **Frank Black**. Victor 10" LP disc, LM 39, \$4.45.

▲IT seems odd that Miss Traubel's return to the Victor fold should not have been signalized by a new Wagnerian recording: one wonders why so stately a voice should have been chosen to perpetuate these light and lilting tunes. Nor is her singing a model of Viennese style. The first of the songs is done in the original German, but after that the language is for the most part English. The rich contralto register the lady has been exploiting lately is once again effectively used — tonally, indeed, there is a good deal to admire throughout the program. —P.L.M.

SCHUBERT: *Der Jüngling an der Quelle; An die Nachtigall*, Op. 98, No. 1; *Die Männer sind mèchant*, Op. 95, No. 3; **Lotte Lehman** (soprano) and **Paul Ulanowsky** (piano). RCA Victor 49-1277, 45-rpm disc, 95c.

SCHUBERT: *Thelka*, Op. 88, No. 2; *Dem Unendlichen*; **Marian Anderson** (contralto) and **Franz Rupp** (piano). RCA Victor 49-1278, 45-rpm disc, 95c.

▲EACH OF THESE DISCS presents one song new to recording along with others which have not been overdone. *Die Männer sind mèchant* is another variation on the old daughter-tells-mother theme; this time the young lady has been deceived and has actually caught the culprit red-handed. It is amusing to recall the circumstances of the publication of this song, one of four "refrain-songs" to poems of Johann Gabriel Seidl. "The public," so the announcement read, "has long cherished the wish to have, for once, a composition of a merry, comic nature from the pen of this songcomposer of genius. The wish has been gratified in a surprising manner by Herr Schubert in the present four songs, which in part are truly comic and in part bear in them the character of ingenuousness and humor." Now, one hundred and

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twenty-two years later, this one among the four that still tempts the talents of recitalists, hardly overwhelms the listener with mirth, but has a certain charm when its archness is not overdone. Like most who sing it, Mme. Lehmann comes pretty close to the borderline. The two songs on the reverse show her to better advantage — in fact she has done no more appealing, sustained singing in recent years.

The poem of *Thelka* is by Schiller, written, we are told, in response to the inquiries of the poet's friends, who wanted to know the fate of Thelka, daughter of the hero of his *Wallenstein* trilogy. The poem, subtitled "a spirit voice," assures us that she is happily united for eternity with her lover. Schubert made two settings of these words; the second is often referred to as well-known, though I do not recall ever hearing it performed before. It is one of those simple Schubert melodies (the *Du bist die Ruh'* type) whose appeal can hardly be analyzed. As Schubert left it the song is certainly too long, and we may be grateful to Miss Anderson for omitting the second stanza. This recording is not free of the tremulousness that sometimes mars the contralto's singing, and the consequent sag in pitch, but it is expressive and sincerely felt. In *Dem Unendlichen* — Klopstock's *Ode to the Infinite* — Miss Anderson's utterance is broad and dignified. If this is not the noblest recorded performance of the song (I cannot forget the old Victor acoustic by Margarete Ober) it is certainly far better than the one made a couple of years ago by Lauritz Melchior. —P.L.M.

SCHUMANN: *Frauenliebe und Leben*, Op. 42; **Marian Anderson** (contralto) and **Franz Rupp** (piano). Victor WDM 1458, 2 45-rpm discs, \$2.20.

▲IT SEEMS ODD that of all the standard German song cycles — including Schubert's *Winterreise* and *Die schöne Müllerin*, Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* and Schumann's *Dichterliebe* — it is *Frauenliebe und Leben* that leads in number and variety of recorded performances. I say it seems odd, because of all these marriages of word and tone (it is impossible to forget Wilhelm Müller, Heinrich Heine or even Alois Jeittele in considering these cycles) Adalbert von Chamisso's text has weathered the passing years with least success. In fact, were Schumann's music

not better than good the poems would long ago have gone the way of their contemporary popularity. Chamisso's little confessional consists of nine poems, the first eight of which lay bare the heart of 19th-century young womanhood, and in the ninth of which the same lady, grown old, gives her best advice to her grand-daughter. Happily Schumann did not set this epilogue. If Chamisso's feminine psychology no longer rings true in our post-Isben generation, we return to the cycle as to the novels of the period, and somehow the genius of Schumann compensates for those parts of the poetry which are hard to take by themselves.

The list of recorded interpreters is an impressive one. In the far distant past there were Julia Culp and Emmy Bettendorf; presently listed as more or less obtainable are Lotte Lehmann (who recorded it twice), Helen Traubel, Astra Desmond, Ria Ginster, Isobel French, Uta Graf, Germaine Martinelli (in French) and I believe Kathleen Ferrier and Elisabeth Höngen have recently done the songs. Without having heard Ginster, Martinelli, Ferrier or Höngen it seems safe to say that none is better recorded than Miss Anderson, who also has the inestimable advantage of the cooperation of Franz Rupp. As always one admires the deep sincerity of her singing and the warmth of her personality, though there is some fluttery tone in this set, and she is not as convincing as other interpreters. In this respect I would perhaps award the palm to Miss Graf were her recent Allegro recording better reproduced, to Miss Desmond were her voice a little lighter in the

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rapid songs, or to Miss French whose intelligence compensates for lack of vocal allure.

—P.L.M.

DRAMATIC SCENES FROM VERDI OPERAS:

Ernani — *Ernani, involami; Otello* — *Salce, Salce, and Ave Maria; La Traviata* — *Ah! fors' è lui and Sempre libera; Don Carlos* — *Tu che le vanita; La Forza del Destino* — *Pace, pace, mio Dio; Eleanor Steber* (soprano) with **Metropolitan Opera Orchestra** conducted by **Fausto Cleva**. Columbia 10" LP disc, \$3.85.

▲AS AN ADMIRER of Miss Steber in the past, I am filled with mixed feelings regarding her latest offerings. It is apparent that she aspires to be a dramatic soprano and is using a greater pressure of breath than formerly with a resultant loss of tonal quality. There is a long way from the type of singing this gifted artist gave us a couple of years back in the aria from *Louise* and the present type of singing she is doing.

While there is musical intelligence in almost everything Miss Steber does, her failure sometimes to enunciate text meaningfully and to color her voice leaves something to be desired. Her *Otello* arias are far from convincing; too impersonal. Her *Ernani* is tonally a little edgy at times and so too is her *Traviata*, though the latter benefits from experience in the opera house. Miss Steber is not a true coloratura but she sings this music with intelligence and with more meaningful enunciation of the words. I find her best work in the aria from *Don Carlos*. Here she has a true dramatic intensity and vocally holds up more convincingly throughout. Her *Pace, pace* has many lovely moments — the old Steber is there with her floated pianissimo tones — but her effort at the end for a big climax is too much like barn-storming.

The soprano has been provided with fine sounding orchestral accompaniments, the result one suspects of Columbia's wonderful 30th Street Studio acoustics. Too, her voice is very lifelike, but this tends to make one the more conscious of her pressure of breath.

—J.N.

VERDI: *Don Carlos* — *Ella giammai m'amo; Dormiro sol nel manto mio regal; Italo Tajo* (basso) with **RCA Victor Orchestra** conducted by **Jean Paul Morel**. Victor 45 rpm disc 49-1380, 95c.

▲I SUPPOSE we may expect every operatic

basso to give us his version of King Philip's great monologue this season. Mr. Tajo delivers it in the voice of an old and broken man, stressing this dramatic concept to something of an extreme at the expense of Verdi's melodic line. The voice is by no means so impressive as that of Cesare Siepi (the Metropolitan's King Philip, whose interpretation of this scene is a part of his Cetra-Soria Recital) nor has it the richness and nobility of Pinza's. Both of these gentlemen, by staying closer to the music, have managed to make the aria more moving. The recording is first-rate.

—P.L.M.

VERDI: *Ernani* (Complete Opera); **Gino Penno** (Ernani); **Giuseppe Taddei** (Don Carlo), **Caterina Mancini** (Elvira), **Giacomo Vaghi** (de Silva), **Licia Rossini** (Giovanni), **Vittorio Pandano** (Riccardo), **Ezio Achilli** (Jago), **Orchestra and Chorus of the Radio Italiana** directed by **Fernando Previtali**. Cetra-Soria set 1210, 3 LP discs, \$17.85.

▲ONCE UPON A TIME (to be exact November 2, 1892), Bernard Shaw attended a forgotten opera by Granville Bantock, called *Caedmar*, which was followed by the third, and best act of *Ernani*, featuring the famous Mario Ancona as Don Carlo, or Charles V of Spain. After *Caedmar*, the crowd thinned out, to the surprise of Shaw, who felt that years of *Faust*, *Carmen*, *Les Huguenots*, etc. had left the audience "ignorant of that ultra-classical product of Romanticism, the grandiose Italian opera in which the executive art consist in a splendid display of personal heroics, and the drama arises out of the simplest and most universal stimulants to them." Shaw's appraisal of *Ernani* needs no amendment.

Verdi should have called this opera, *The Love of Three Noblemen*, for the plot revolves around the love of three men for one woman. But Verdi must have reasoned that Ernani, the outlawed Spanish duke turned bandit, would become in Italy "the embodiment of the proscribed patriot," which he did.

This performance is an all-around sound one, with appealing voices in almost every role. Though I feel that the conductor's steady beat contributes greatly to the overall smoothness of the performance, the better than average artistry of this all-Italian cast deserves its praise. While Taddei is the star, in so far as American listeners are concerned,

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his voice is almost too heavy for the role but his singing is consistently rewarding. Don Carlo is at best an unconvincing character, "divided into two incompatible halves" (Toye) — eroticism and magnanimity, but he gets the lion's share of the score. The tenor, Gino Penno, knows how to sing, and he possesses a clear, ringing voice. Caterina Mancini suggests a seasoned artist. Her soprano voice is full and resonant, and her singing has appropriate fervor. A tendency to portamento seems to be her chief fault. Vaghi, as de Silva, has tonal warmth but his intonation is often faulty. His is no more than a serviceable bass voice. The other singers fit into the picture, and the richly resonant orchestral playing is most satisfactory.

As a recording, this rates with the best that Cetra-Soria has brought out. Incidentally, *Ernani* is the first of a long series of Verdi operas which this company will issue in the coming year. To my way of thinking this is a performance, that rates, both from the vocal and reproductive aspect, several notches above Cetra-Soria's earlier Verdi release, *La Forza del Destino*. —P.H.R.

VERDI: *Trovatore* — *Stride la vampa!*; *Con-dotta ell' era in ceppi*; *Cloe Elmo* (mezzo-soprano) with **RCA Victor Orchestra** conducted by **Jean Paul Morel**. Victor 45 rpm disc 49-1381, 95c.

▲SINCE her sensational debut as Azucena at the Metropolitan in 1947, Cloe Elmo seems to have achieved something very like oblivion at that institution. This season her name is not listed. As a recording artist, too, she has been sadly overlooked, though Cetra-Soria has made some of her pre-American performances available in this country. Her portrait has graced Victor advertisements for some time, yet only one imported duet with Gigli has previously found its way into the catalogue. Her first American recording will bring back vivid memories to those who heard her as the Gypsy in Verdi's opera, for her splendid intelligence and strong temperament are admirably in evidence. There may also, however, be some explanation here of the eclipse she has undergone. The voice, rich and expressive in the middle registers, is distinctly limited in the extremes, and her cleverest dodges do not obscure the lack of those strong high tones — shrieks, if you will — called for by the score. And though

she knows how to use her chest voice in the approved Italian manner, one feels that the ending of the narrative takes her about as low as she can safely go. *Stride la vampa!* loses by her abstaining from any attempt at a trill, and the ending of each stanza is abruptly clipped. Nevertheless, this is haunting, exciting singing, and I suspect it will stand up under repetition. —P.L.M.

Record Miscellany

TOSCANINI CONDUCTS LIGHT MUSIC — *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (Dukas); *The Skaters Waltz* (Waldteufel); *Overture to Colus Breugnon, Op. 24* (Kabalevsky); **NBC Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Arturo Toscanini**. RCA Victor set, 3 45-rpm discs, \$3.35.

Toscanini's treatment of the Dukas score is taut and highly efficient. The coloration that Jorda obtains in his performance is miss-

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ing and the two breaks are irksome after the LP version. The recording is unusually brilliant. For us, Toscanini's streamlined *Skaters Waltz* has its fascination; it is played with a polished precision which makes it seem more important than it is, and the Kabalevsky overture, full of rhythmic life and swaggering melodies, is turned out to perfection. Both this and the waltz were issued previously on 78 rpm discs.

MY FAVORITES — Gladys Swarthout: *Funiculi, Funicula* (Denza); *Estrellita* (Ponce); *O Promise Me* (De Koven); *One Night of Love* (Schertzinger); *I Wonder as I Wander* (arr. Niles); *Bless This House* (Brahe); *At Dawning* (Cadman); *The Lord's Prayer* (Malotte); Miss Swarthout with RCA Victor Orchestra conducted by Milton Katims. RCA Victor set, 4 45-rpm discs, \$4.30.

▲Miss Swarthout has chosen a strangely mixed group of songs which she sings with warmth of feeling and careful artistry. The Niles *I Wonder as I Wander* is the most appealing in the group — a heartfelt folk song.

Mr. Katims contributes musically accompaniments, and the recording is very natural. No notes with this set.

JEANETTE MACDONALD FAVORITES — *Indian Love Call* (Friml); *Les Filles de Cadiz* (Delibes); *Beyond the Blue Horizon* (Whiting-Harting); *One Night of Love* (Schertzinger); *Only A Rose* (Friml); *Ciribiribin* (Pestalozza); Miss MacDonald with RCA Victor Orchestra conducted by Robert Russell Bennett. RCA Victor set WDM 1431, 3 45-rpm discs, \$3.30.

▲While Miss MacDonald has her charms, she also has her limitations. The voice is not large and she seldom achieves a true climax, but she usually floats her tones in an effortless manner. Excellent recording.

SONGS FROM SUNNY ITALY — *Torna a Surriento* (De Curtis); *Non ti scordar di me* (De Curtis); *Mamma mia, che vo sape?* (Nutile); *Lolita* (Buzzi-Peccia); *Dicilencello suel* (Falvo); *Torna, piccina* (Bixio); *O sole mio* (Di Capua); *La Danza* — *Taranella Napoletana* (Rossini); Richard Tucker (tenor) with Columbia Concert Orchestra conducted by Alfredo Antonini. Columbia 10" LP disc ML 2155, \$3.85.

▲Mr. Tucker sings with all the fervor and mannerisms, and sometimes the tightening of tones, of a native-born Neapolitan. Realistic recording. Inadequate notes — no text.

COATES: Knightsbridge March; and MEACHAM: American Patrol March; Boston Pops Orchestra conducted by Arthur Fiedler. Victor 45 rpm disc 49-3043, 95c.

▲An easy assignment for the ever reliable Mr. Fiedler. Play the *American Patrol* to grandpa, it was a favorite pianolo roll in his day. Need we say, top-drawer recording?

WEISS-BAUM (arr. Anderson): *Classical Juke Box*; and **ANDERSON: Syncopated Clock; Boston Pops Orchestra** conducted by Arthur Fiedler. Victor 45-rpm disc 49-3044, 95c.

▲A couple of light-weights, neatly turned by Mr. Fiedler. Maybe there's humor in the *Juke Box* but it seemed to us a bit too obvious.

THE HEART OF THE PIANO CONCERTO; J. M. Sanroma (piano) with the **Boston Pops Orchestra** conducted by Arthur Fiedler. Victor LP disc LMX-1105, \$4.85.

THE HEART OF THE SYMPHONY; Boston Pops Orchestra conducted by Arthur Fiedler. RCA Victor LP disc LMX-1085, \$4.85.

▲Both discs have movements shortened from eight works by different composers in sequences which just don't correlate. The piano concerto sequence was issued before the war. The symphony disc is new and considering that the efficient Fiedler does a first-rate job, it seems rank injustice on Victor's part not to let him record a few complete symphonies. Some highly reverberant recording in the latter disc.

ENCHANTED MELODIES — *Au pays* (Holmes); *Do You Remember?* (Levitzi); *In the Night* (Edwards); *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* — *La calunnia* (Rossini); *Le Cor* (Flégier); *L'Ultima canzone* (Tosti); *La Boheme* — *Vecchia zimarra, senti*; Ezio Pinza (bass) with orchestra conducted by Fausto Cleva and Wilfred Pelletier and with piano by Gibner King. Columbia 10" LP disc ML 2142, \$3.85.

▲An LP assembly of previous 78-rpm releases. This business of switching from piano to orchestra seems odd to say the least. And

the notes with this disc are unbelievably bad—no texts. Safe to say, the smiling face of Pinza on the cover will win fair hearts, though some of his singing is not as “enchanted” as it used to be.

POPULAR CLASSICS FOR FOUR PIANOS — *Estudiantina* (Waldteufel); *Consolation No. 3* (Liszt); *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy*, *Dance of the Reed-Pipes*; *Waltz of the Flowers* (Tchaikovsky); *Perpetuum mobile* (J. Strauss); *Offenbachiana* (Offenbach); **The Philharmonic Piano Quartet**. Columbia LP disc ML 2154, \$4.85.

▲Fistrute recording of a mechanistic assembly of pianos in transcriptions for them that likes them!

ISAAC STERN IN VIOLIN FAVORITES — *Hora Staccato* (Dinicu-Heifetz); *Album Leaf* (Wagner); *Tijuca* from *Saudades do Brazil* (Milhaud); *Largo* (Pugnani); *Caprice basque, Op. 24* (Sarasate); *Slavonic Dance No. 2 in E minor, Op. 36* (Dvorak-Kreisler); *Nigun* (Bloch); *Danse des jeunes Antillaises* and *Masques* (Prokofiev); *Perpetuum mobile* (Novacek). Columbia LP disc ML 4324, \$4.85.

▲As programs of this kind go, this one seems a bit better than most. It's just the sort of program a player might arrange for a church social or a men's club. Stern plays tastefully throughout—cleanly, straightforwardly and without pretension. Some of these selections are new, others were released previously.

GOULD (arr.): Manhattan Moods; Morton Gould and his orchestra. Columbia 10" LP disc ML-2144, \$3.85.

▲IN a slick arrangement by Morton Gould here are six selections — mostly of the pseudo-Gershwin type — that have all of the charm and warmth of machine-tooled aluminum plate.

The pieces that make up this suite are Louis Alter's *Manhattan Serenade* and *Manhattan Moonlight*, Thomas Griselle's *Nocturne*, Matty Malneck and Frank Signorelli's *Park Avenue Fantasy*, Gould's own *Big City Blues*, and Alfred Newman's *Street Scene*.

The recording of *Moods* is just as “phony” as its music. It has all of the hallmarks of a souped-up Hollywood sound track. —P.G.
FUNT: The Candid Microphone — Vol. I.

Columbia LP disc ML4344, \$4.85.

▲HERE IS A NEW KIND of party record,

one that all record collectors should have on tap to play when non-musical friends and relatives come calling and require entertainment. You have probably heard Allen Funt's “Candid Microphone” program on radio and television. This disc is a collection of the best of these candid portraits in sound, the secretly recorded conversations of real people in real-life situations. Hidden microphones are planted, then Funt sets the stage by needling a street pitchman, heckling the switchboard operator at a bus terminal, or hiring a moving man to take away a trunk containing a live, moaning man.

The incredible reactions of the man on the street are captured for the edification and amusement of his brothers and sisters. As a contrast, there is a moving bit in which the microphone eavesdrops on the conversation of two severely disabled veterans (one is blind) in the waiting room of a Veterans Administration office.

The material has been edited with good taste. A handy disc to have ready when conversation lags.

—A.W.P.

BELOVED RELIGIOUS SONGS: *Ave Maria* (Schubert), *The Palms* (J. B. Faure), *Lead, kindly Light* (Dykes), *Silent Night* (Gruber), *The Lost Chord* (Sullivan), *The Lord's Prayer* (Malotte); **Helen Traubel** (soprano) with **RCA Victor Orchestra** conducted by **Frank Black**. RCA Victor WDM 1453, 3 45-rpm discs, \$3.35.

RELIGIOUS SONGS: *Agnus Dei* (Bizet), *Nearer, My God, to thee* (Mason); *Paris Angelicus* (Franck); *Abide with me* (Monk); *The Holy City* (Adams); *Battle Hymn of the Republic* (Steffe). **Rise Stevens** (mezzo-soprano) with **RCA Victor Orchestra and Chorus** conducted by **Frank Black**. RCA Victor 10" LP disc, LM(U)38, \$3.85.

▲THESE TWO PROGRAMS are apparently designed to catch the Christmas trade. A choice between them will be determined by the purchaser's preference for one or the other singer. Miss Traubel makes generous use of her rich and ample middle register, but she shows too on occasion — as in the Malotte

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Lord's Prayer — that she can still rise to a broad and impressive climax. She sings the Schubert *Ave Maria* in English, but to a text which, whatever the label may say, is certainly not Sir Walter Scott's original, and she gives one stanza of *Silent Night* in English and one in German. The German stanza calls forth the best singing in the set. Perhaps she is sensible in a program like this to keep things for the most part even and uneventful. Those to whom the words appeal will enjoy her careful enunciation.

For her part Miss Stevens is in good voice, and she sings with commendable restraint. Only in the *Battle Hymn* does her enthusiasm get the better of her control. Mr. Black furnishes a glowing background throughout the program. —P.L.M.

SCHUMANN: *Quintet in E flat, Op. 44;* Artur Rubinstein (piano) with the Paganini Quartet. RCA Victor LP disc LM 1095, \$5.45.

▲ **HERE WE HAVE** very clean, exact and careful playing. But somehow the perfection of execution does not communicate the true romantic charm or exuberance of this music. The beginning is surprisingly heavy-handed, and as an old chamber-music enthusiast I remember the wonderful uplift that Gabrilowitsch and the Flonzaleys brought to the opening bars and the elative spirit with which they continued throughout the first movement. (Their complete and best performance was made in 1928, not 1923 as the annotator says.) Serkin and the Busch Quartet, though not as spontaneous as the older group, communicate more to me in this music, and their performance is available on a 10" LP disc.

There is much to admire in beauty of sound from Rubinstein's piano and the four famous instruments of the Paganini Quartet if one does not ask for more. Too, the recording is very fine, well balanced and rightfully resonant. —P.H.R.

DEBUSSY: *Clair de Lune; Minstrels; Afternoon of a Faun; The Sunken Cathedral; Sacred Dance; Prelude in A Minor.* George Copeland, piano. M.G.M. 10" LP disc E-526, \$3.85.

▲ **FOR THOSE** who both love and admire the Debussy piano literature — and they must be legion by now — this disc should give a deal of satisfaction. George Copeland, long ad-

mired as one of the most distinguished interpreters of the French master's music, here plays with authority, precision, and appropriate atmosphere four of the most popular Debussy piano pieces and two others in his own arrangements.

And Copeland really plays. He does not strum or moon over his Debussy as so many other pianists do. He unfailingly makes the shape of any work clear, makes any work sound sturdy and graceful. He is also a master of evoking by pianistic means the quality and color of other instruments. Copeland's use of this invaluable technical tool, ever in evidence in his playing here, is his acknowledgement of the now-almost-accepted theory that Debussy composed his piano works with that approach in mind.

The recording of Copeland's playing is the close-on, small, resonant studio type. Except that the bass is rather weak, this is a good example of that style of recording. —C.J.L.

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STRAUSS, Joh.: *Die Fledermaus* (complete opera); Soloists and chorus of the Vienna State Opera with Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Clemens Krauss. London LP set LLP 281, \$11.90.

▲ **NONE** of THESE important releases arrived in time for review in this issue. The Prades Bach Festival discs and the Vivaldi concertos are of the greatest interest. They rate among the most outstanding releases of the past year.

The advent of a Viennese operetta emanating from Vienna has its special attractions and appeal.

These recordings will be discussed at length in our next issue. —Ed

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